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THE WORKS OF LOUIS DE BLOIS

COMMONLY CALLED LUDOVICUS BLOSIUS

IV—THE SANCTUARY OF THE FAITHFUL SOUL—PART I

THE SANCTUARY OF THE FAITHFUL SOUL

(CONCLAVE ANIMAE FIDELIS)

PART I.—SPECULUM SPIRITUALE
A SPIRITUAL MIRROR

By LUDOVICUS BLOSIUS

Translated from the Latin by
BERTRAND A. WILBERFORCE
Of the Order of Preachers

With an Introduction by
BERNARD DELANY, of the same Order

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LONDON
BURNS OATES & WASHBOURNE LTD
Publishers to the Holy See
1926

44739

NIHIL OBSTAT:

F. Humbertus Everest, O.P., S.T.L.
F. Hugo Pope, O.P., S.T.L.

IMPRIMATUR:

F. Laurentius Shapcote, Prov. O.P., S.T.L.

IMPRIMATUR:

Gulielmus Praepositus Johnson,
Vicarius generalis.

Westmonasterii,
die 31 *Decembris*, 1904.

First Edition, 1905.
Reprinted in Collected Works, 1926.

Made and Printed in Great Britain

INTRODUCTION

"LOOK frequently into this book, which I, now fifty years old, have written for myself and for thee as a spiritual mirror." These words, which appear by way of epilogue to the present work, go to show that the *Conclave animae fidelis*, or *The Sanctuary of the Faithful Soul*, was being written somewhere about the year 1558, and that it comes next in order of time to the book which has been published in this series as *Comfort for the Fainthearted* (*Consolatio Pusillanimium*). The *Conclave animae fidelis* consists of four separate works: *Speculum Spirituale* (*A Spiritual Mirror*); *Monile Spirituale* (*A String of Spiritual Jewels*); *Corona Spiritualis* (*A Spiritual Crown*); *Scrinolinium Spirituale* (*A Spiritual Casket*).

The first of these, *A Spiritual Mirror*, is the book we are now introducing. The translation is the work of Father Bertrand Wilberforce, who did so much to make known to English readers the writings of the great Benedictine abbot. It was the last of Father Bertrand's labours in honour of his beloved Blosius. He died in the December of 1904

while the last sheets of the first edition of this work were passing through the press. Another translation of *A Spiritual Mirror*, edited by Father John Edward Bowden of the Oratory of St Philip Neri, had appeared in 1871* and achieved its fourth edition in 1903. A careful comparison of the two renderings leaves us convinced of the superior worth of Father Bertrand's version. He seems to have seized more perfectly the sense and simplicity of the original, and to have turned it into a terse, vigorous English which finely reflects all the crystal clearness of the Latin with a pleasing regard for our familiar native idiom.

* * * * *

Modern readers of the works of Louis of Blois will perhaps understand him better if they try to put him in his true historical setting. His sturdy common sense, his wholesome piety, his quiet gentleness and never-failing kindliness are all qualities that attract us to-day as much as they must have charmed well-disposed men of the age for which he wrote. But we are more than enchanted; we add wonder to entrancement, when we remember that all this serene

* *Spiritual Works of Louis of Blois* (R. Washbourne, London).

wisdom and sane cheerfulness came out of an age that was the reverse of tranquil. The sixty years of his life from 1506 till 1566 covered the most tragic part of that frantic epoch which historians call the Reformation. He was the contemporary of Luther and Calvin. He saw the apostasy of Henry VIII. He saw England filched of its faith. He saw the early days of Elizabeth. But he was also the contemporary of St Ignatius and of St Teresa. He lived, too, to see the Council of Trent and the progress of the counter-Reformation.

Remembering the sad period in which he lived, we shall better understand the severe things he says about heretics and those who are outside the Church. For Blosius a heretic was one who had made a definite choice of a view that was directly and unmistakably opposed to the manifest teaching of the Church in which Christ dwells and through which God speaks. A heretic, a subverter as St Paul calls him, who should corrupt faith which quickens the soul, would commit a worse crime than the murderer who only destroys the body. Yet not everyone to-day outside the household of the faith is a heretic in that sense; not all can be accused of formal heresy. Heresy, especially in England, has become a woeful heritage of

people who cannot be blamed for beliefs and misbeliefs which are not of their own choosing. Blosius is not condemning those who are lost in the fog, but those who created the fog.

It has been truly said that Blosius—who, as a boy, had been a page at the Court of Charles V—did more in his quiet cloister to arrest the growth of irreligion in the sixteenth century than his imperial master. It is in the hope that this benign influence for truth and goodness may still be continued that these volumes are being offered to English readers.

BERNARD DELANY, O.P.

BLACKFRIARS,
OXFORD.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

1. *The Reason why Blosius Wrote this Book.*

I HAVE written this book, overcome by the constant but loving pressure of a friend. He continually begged me to publish a book that might serve as a kind of spiritual mirror, in which he desired me to lay down clearly, though shortly, the chief things necessary for leading a holy life. He also desired me to bring forward carefully everything I could which is likely to give comfort to the soul, and hope and trust in God, to one who, though sinful and imperfect, is nevertheless a man of good will, in order that all Christians might be able to use the book as a spiritual mirror. With a view, therefore, to satisfy, as far as I can, the righteous desire of my friend, I have thrown together a good many thoughts that came to my memory. What I have done, I have done for God's honour, and I humbly submit what I have collected and written to the judgement of our holy Mother the Church.

2. *The Book is Written for Men of Good Will.*

Let it be clearly understood that those who, without fear of God, deliberately remain in their sins and iniquities must not for a moment imagine that the comforting words of this book apply to them, for they are not men of good will, nor in fact are they Christians at all in the true sense of the word. They must first amend their lives, and then those things which are here said and written about the immense loving-kindness and mercy of God will apply to them. But if, on the other hand, they refuse to change their wicked lives, they will certainly experience the severity of the divine justice and will suffer eternal torments in hell.

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HOW HE OUGHT TO BEGIN WHO DESIRES TO SERVE GOD WITH HIS WHOLE SOUL

SECTION I

THE FOUNDATION OF SPIRITUAL LIFE IS THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND OURSELVES

1. Think reverently of God: fear, honour and love him.
2. To please him, all sins must be abandoned.
3. Understand why thou art in this world: to serve God faithfully here, and to possess and enjoy him for ever in heaven.

1. BELOVED friend, I warn, exhort, and earnestly beg thee to fear, honour, and love the Lord thy God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one in Substance, three in Persons. For he is almighty, boundless in all perfection, eternal, most high, unchangeable, incomprehensible, infinitely just, holy, wise, good, and sweet. He made, out of nothing, heaven and earth, and all things that are found in heaven or on the earth. He seeth and knoweth perfectly not only all the actions of all men, but also their thoughts and affections. He knoweth all things, past. present,

and to come. Man he loveth with exceeding great love, and as long as this life endureth he never ceaseth to do good to everyone. Therefore doth he deserve to be feared, honoured, and loved by all.

2. Take the utmost care not to injure him by sin. Even if by consenting to any sin it were in thy power to deliver thyself and many others from death, by no means consent to sin, for never can it be lawful to do evil that good may come of it, and utterly absurd would it be, for the mere advantage of creatures, who compared to God are as nothing, knowingly and with deliberate will to offend the Creator, who is the infinite good. The holy fear of God incessantly admonisheth a man to abstain from sin and to *live soberly and justly and godly in this present world.**

3. Reflect deeply on this truth, that thou wast created by God, and hast received from him a soul that is immortal and endowed with reason, in order that thou mayest obey God here, and love him; and that, by obeying him and living well, thou mayest hereafter see him with clear vision, and mayest enjoy him for ever. For if thou dost now carefully keep from evil and do good; if worshipping God faithfully thou dost end thy life in his love,

* Titus ii 12.

thou wilt joyfully come, through the passion and merits of Jesus Christ, to the perfect happiness of heaven.

SECTION II

GOD MUST BE KNOWN ACCORDING TO THE TEACHING OF THE TRUE AND PURE FAITH

1. Persevere in the orthodox faith, in obedience to the Catholic Church and to her supreme head on earth, the Roman Pontiff.
2. Outside the communion of this Church no one can be saved, however righteous his life or pious his death may appear to be.
3. A thousand times better then would it be to die than to depart from the faith.
4. Have no kind of intercourse with the devil through magicians or sorcerers.*

1. HOLD fast to the orthodox faith,† believing without any hesitation all things contained in the holy canonical Scriptures received by the Church, and all things which the Holy Ghost revealeth and proposeth to be believed, through the Church. Humbly obey the Catholic Church, even if thou shouldst see some of its pastors not living good lives. For our Lord Jesus, speaking in the Gospel about those pastors who live indeed bad lives, but still teach and command aright, saith:

* Through spiritualists or mediums we should now say.—TRANSLATOR.

† *Cf.* Apoc. iii 11.

*All things whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do ; but according to their works do ye not ; for they say and do not.**

He who despiseth the Church, which is the mystical body of Christ, despiseth also the Head of the Church—namely, Christ himself, as he himself declareth most plainly in these words: *He that heareth you, heareth me : and he that despiseth you, despiseth me, and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.*†

Over this universal and apostolical Church, which St Paul calls *the pillar and ground of the truth,*‡ the supreme pontiff, the successor of blessed Peter, rules on earth by the appointment of our Lord.

2. Out of this Church which is one, out of this ark of Noah, no one whatsoever is saved.§ For although it is true that in that Church there are not only good but also many wicked men, who encourage serious abuses and are guilty of great sins, nevertheless the truth remaineth in it. She indeed is the threshing

* Matt. xxiii 3. † Luke x 16.

‡ 1 Tim. iii 15; Matt. xvi 18; John xxi 15-18.

§ That is, those culpably outside the fold of the "one Catholic and Apostolic Church." To be wilfully and by our own act outside the *one body* (Eph. iv 4) is to be in a state of mortal sin. Blosius would not deny that many who have been born out of the body of the Church may be in inculpable ignorance. —TRANSLATOR.

floor in which, here below, are found not only the good grain but also the barren and light chaff mingled with the grain. In spite of this the truth is found in her, because the Holy Ghost teacheth, illuminateth, and ruleth the faithful in her fold, and giveth to that same Church the true understanding of the divine Scriptures.

Therefore it is most certain that all those who hold and defend anything contrary to the teaching of the Roman and Catholic Church, and thus separate themselves from its unity, if they go out of this life in obstinate heresy or schism, will suffer eternal punishment in hell, although some may appear to have lived righteous lives here below.

For, in point of fact, heretics and schismatics, although they may appear to be modest, kind, sober, and chaste in a high degree; although they may dispense very large alms to the poor; although they may diligently pray to God, and in their prayers may shed many tears of compunction, yea, even if they should lead lives of great austerity, and should do wonderful works, even if they should deliver their bodies willingly and bravely to death, yet, because they are proud and wrest the Holy Scriptures by false explanations, thus rending the unity of the Church, they cannot have true charity. God

holds them in abomination. From his kingdom he casteth them out as most grievous enemies. Never can they attain salvation unless with humility and obedience they submit to the Church, their Mother, and lay aside their evil doctrines. Stand steadfast then, as I have said, in the right and true Christian faith, believing without pretence or guile whatever the Catholic Church believeth, and doing what she piously doth.

3. If thou shouldest enter into this strait that thou must either deny the orthodox faith or submit to torments and death, die rather than deny the true faith by any word or sign, yea, die, if possible, even a thousand times.* For he that will deny Christ or the faith, shall by Christ himself be denied before his Father, unless, like St Peter after his triple denial, he repenteth and doth penance with the apostle by bitter tears. He, on the other hand, who will humbly offer himself to death for the right faith and for the truth, shall be blessed indeed. Such men the Lord Jesus declareth in the Gospel to be secure of salvation in these words: *Fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul.*† Again, *A hair of your head shall not perish. In your patience you shall possess*

* *Cf.* Mark viii 38. † Matt. x 28.

*your souls.** And again, *He that shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it.*†

4. Detest all superstitious observances and every kind of magical art. Never seek any help in trouble, or counsel in difficulty, by sorcery or witchcraft, but always fly to the Lord thy God, put thy hope in him and lean upon him. Hear God himself, speaking on this point to his own people in Deuteronomy, thus: *Let there not be found among you anyone that consulteth soothsayers, or observeth dreams or omens, neither let there be any wizard nor charmer, nor anyone that consulteth pythonic* (familiar) *spirits or fortune-tellers, or that seeketh the truth from the dead.*‡ *For all these things the Lord abhorreth, and for these abominations he will destroy them* (the nations of Palestine) *at thy coming. Thou shalt be perfect and without spot before the Lord thy God. These nations, whose land thou shalt possess, hearken to soothsayers and diviners, but thou art otherwise instructed by the Lord thy God.*§

In good truth, he who seeks a remedy in trouble or counsel in doubt from such as these, leaveth God and seeketh the aid of the devil.‖

* Luke xxi 18. † Matt. x 39.
‡ Deut. xviii 10. § 1 Kings xxviii 7.
‖ Some may think that these warnings are not necessary in the twentieth century, but what do spiritualists do except *seek the truth from the dead?*

SECTION III

INNOCENCE OF LIFE

1. Nothing defiled can enter into heaven.
2. Cleanse the conscience by contrition and confession.
3. Confess every mortal sin.
4. Avoid scrupulous and anxious confession.
5. Venial sin need not be confessed.
6. After confession live in peace.

1. Be careful to avoid all wickedness, and lay to heart the following serious and weighty words of St Paul the apostle: *Know you not that the unjust shall not possess the kingdom of God? Do not err: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, nor liers with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor railers, nor extortioners shall possess the kingdom of God.** And to the Galatians he writes: *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, luxury, idolatry, witchcrafts, enmities, contentions, emulations, wraths, quarrels, dissensions, sects, envies, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. Of the which I foretell you, as I have foretold you, that*

(Deut. xviii 11). Instead of *hearing the Church* about the next world, its rewards and punishments, they go to a seance and *seek the truth from the dead*.—TRANSLATOR.

* 1 Cor. vi 9.

*they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God.** These are the words of St Paul, and certainly will they who do such things lose their souls, unless they are reconciled to God by true repentance and amendment of life. On the tremendous day of judgement, when the Lord *will thoroughly cleanse his floor*† and the chaff will be separated from the wheat, Christ will say to them in his wrath: *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.*‡ Keep these words always in thy mind.

2. In order to obtain cleanness of heart and conscience, and in order that thy soul may dwell in light, call to mind how thou mayest have displeased God and neglected thine own soul in words, actions, desires, and thoughts; by want of self-denial, by lack of purity of intention in any affection, and all those things which have been embraced by the will inordinately and unrighteously, and which are contrary to holy charity and displeasing to the most gracious will of God. Search into thyself and sift all that thou canst remember, and, discontented with thyself, cry out in thy heart with the Publican: *Lord, be merciful to me a sinner!*§ I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned. Have mercy on me. My sins are so many and of such divers

* Gal. v 19.
† Matt. iii 12.
‡ Matt. xxv 41.
§ Luke xviii 13.

sorts that thou only, O God, canst perfectly know them. Forgive me, a wretched sinner. Cleanse my soul from every stain, adorn it with thy grace, giving me good will.

Thus watch over thyself and judge thyself. Mourn in this way before thy heavenly Father, whose property it is ever to have mercy and to spare. Our grief should be purely for the glory of God, and our iniquities should be displeasing to us chiefly because we know that they displease God and are contrary to his honour and his will. Think more of the injury done to God than of the punishments due to sin.

3. After this preparation confess thy sins humbly, with full sincerity and a plain acknowledgement, though with few words; do this not only to God, but also to a duly appointed priest, the vicar of God, holding his place, to whom God hath given authority to forgive sin. If thou dost desire, thou canst make a general confession of all the mortal sins thou canst remember since the time of childhood. When this hath once been done, it is enough, and the eternal truth of God is satisfied, although some holy men have done this more than once. At least it is right that we who daily sin and stain our souls should often cleanse them by confession to a priest.

4. On the other hand, cast away useless

and vain scruples. These scruples lessen the spiritual light of the soul, and by fear, anxiety, and self-love they deface the beauty of the conscience, which ought to be always adorned with faith, hope, and charity. If, after a carefully made confession, remorse should still remain, bear the trial patiently, with humble resignation, but take heed not lightly* to repeat thy confession.

5. Be not, therefore, over anxious and troubled, if perchance thou hast not mentioned all thy venial sins in confession. Such lesser sins it is enough to have acknowledged in a general way. Mortal sins only, and those about which there is a doubt whether they may not be mortal, are the only ones that we are bound by a command of God, and by obligation to confess, one by one, clearly, to a priest. But to God we ought earnestly to confess even our venial sins. These can be in various ways blotted out: by contrition, by saying the Lord's prayer, by bearing any trouble for God's sake, by the use of holy water, by kneeling, by sighs of an afflicted spirit, by striking the breast, and other similar things, provided such things are done with a loving and religious spirit. It is, however, useful to the soul and pleasing unto God to

* *Leviter*, which would imply, do not do so without careful consideration and advice.—TRANSLATOR.

confess clearly even our venial sins to a priest, but, as already said, vain scruples must be cast away.

6. In truth, when it grieves thee to have sinned, and thou dost now repent of ever having offended God; when thy determination is to serve and love him for the time to come; when thou hast taken pains to make a good confession; thou shouldst be of good heart and dwell in peace. Carefully do whatever may be enjoined by the priest, and then trust to the power of confession and the promise of God. Believe the words of our Lord, who has said to priests authorized to hear confessions: *Whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven.**

SECTION IV

STOUT-HEARTED HOPE

1. HOPE in the loving-kindness and mercy of God. For now, because thou hast purified thyself by due contrition, confession and satisfaction, thou art reconciled to God, even if thou alone hadst committed all the iniquities and sins of all men. He hath already received thee into his favour, and the past sins which he hath forgiven he will never upbraid thee with, nor impute to thee as guilt.†

* Matt. xviii 18. † *Cf.* Ps. xxx 1.

He hath covered them, he hath utterly blotted them out, if only thy repentance hath been sincere, holy, and from God; they are in his sight as if they had never been. The all-important matter now is to persevere in a good and pious life, and when thou fallest through weakness, promptly to rise again. God is a most generous King, and remits most willingly all thy debts: he is a Physician of almighty power, who cureth every spiritual disease, however serious it may be, more quickly than the word can be uttered. Remember the instances of King David, Mary Magdalen, the thief on the cross, and others without number. As easy is it for God to forgive many mortal sins as one. And most pleasing is it to him that we should think thus of him, so that we may humbly say:

"O Lord Jesus, I trust in thy boundless goodness, that thou wilt never suffer me to perish, whom thou hast created according to thine image and likeness, and hast redeemed with untold labour."

Although thy sins may be many, what are they compared to the infinite mercy of God?

2. Some men, of too little faith, on account of the sins they have committed, or on account of the dreadful temptations with which they are tormented by the devil, give up the hope of salvation. They imagine that their con-

sciences are so strongly bound by the cords of sin that God does not will or even may not be able to come to their aid. They are agitated by a fear that they are unable to calm, imagine that everything they do is displeasing to God, that they are utterly lost and in a state of everlasting damnation. This is a serious and most hurtful error, and to consent to it wilfully is greatly to dishonour God. God is both able and willing to forgive everyone who hath true contrition, and to deliver and free him from every obstacle to his salvation, whatever it may be.

In fact, if God did not desire to forgive every converted sinner, he would not wait so patiently for his conversion, nor would he give him contrition and good will. On the contrary, he would have cut him off in the midst of his sins, and have cast him into everlasting damnation, according as his iniquities deserved. Sometimes he doth permit his faithful servants and chosen friends to be for a long time assailed and tortured by feelings of despair and other diabolical temptations, but this he doth out of his unfathomable love for them, protecting them meanwhile and holding them up lest they fall.

3. Many, on the other hand, looking in a wrong light at the great depth of God's mercy, lose their souls, because they do not

amend their wicked lives, saying, if not in so many words, yet practically: "Why should we not do as we like, for whenever we choose to turn to God he will forgive us and pardon all our sins?" But alas! such men, while they rashly promise themselves long life and true repentance, by the just judgement of God often have neither vouchsafed to them, and die in their sins.

4. But how can it possibly come to pass that he who is ready to correct his evil ways should despair of the loving-kindness and mercy of God? For God says by his prophet: *When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness which he hath done, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done; in his justice which he hath wrought he shall live. Is it my will that a sinner should die, saith the Lord, and not that he should be converted and live?** Again, by the mouth of Isaias, God saith: *Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will I not forget thee.*†

By the mouth also of Jeremias does not God say: *Behold I am the Lord, the God of all flesh, shall anything be hard for me?*‡ *I have*

* Ezec. xviii 22, 23, 27. † Isa. xlix 15.
‡ Jer. xxxii 27.

*blotted out thine iniquities as a cloud, and thy sins as a mist; return to me, for I have redeemed thee.** *Wash yourselves, be clean, take away the evil of your devices from mine eyes, cease to do perversely, learn to do well. . . . If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow; and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool.*†

By these and multitudes of other texts of the like kind does God, who desires no one to perish, comfort thee in the Holy Scriptures, in order to draw thee to trust in his most merciful goodness. Trust, then, O man of good will, trust in the mercy of thy God, even if just after thou hast begun to amend thy life thou art called on to depart out of this world.

For, as the Gospel teaches,‡ those in the parable received the *denarius*, or wage of everlasting happiness, who had laboured only one little hour in the vineyard; that is, who had lived righteously and in a holy manner for a very short time. Those also are declared blessed by our Lord who in the third watch, that is in old age, are found ready. If, on the other hand, thou art not called from this life very soon after thy conversion and turning to God, persevere bravely in thy holy resolution and in the fear of the Lord.

* Isa. xliv 22. † Isa. i 16.
‡ *Cf.* Matt. xx 10.

CHAPTER II

CERTAIN VIRTUES TO THE PRACTICE OF WHICH A CHRISTIAN MAN SHOULD ALWAYS ATTEND

SECTION I

PATIENCE

1. At first peace, then sufferings and trials.
2. The cross allowed by God should be borne patiently and joyfully.
3. Nothing comes from him except for our good.

1. In order that after the time of thy conversion thou mayest do penance for the past in a way most pleasing to God, bear with a meek and humble heart all hard and trying things, which come upon thee by God's permission and are brought on thee by means of created things. Our Lord is wont in his dealings with souls to fill a man in the beginning of his conversion with joy and many spiritual comforts, feeding him constantly with spiritual milk and the white bread of his grace; but afterwards for the most part he taketh away this sweetness, and offers the soul, instead, solid food and the black bread of affliction. He leadeth the soul along a road most uninviting, rough and dark, thus trying it with daily troubles and indescribable

distresses, so that a man thus afflicted feels as if he were utterly abandoned and rejected by our Lord, and in a measure delivered over to Satan. At the same time also he is attacked by storms of temptations which arise in the lower part of the soul and are often helped by the persecutions of men.

2. If all this should happen to thee, see that thou dost behave as a brave and wise soldier. Trust firmly in the good God, who from true love thus scourgeth thee or alloweth thee to be scourged by others. Do not throw down the cross he hath placed on thy shoulders, for that cross is indeed wholesome and far more useful than a great abundance of spiritual sweetness. Our Lord is a most skilful physician; he burns, he cuts, he gives thee bitter draughts that he may heal thy soul. Being fully persuaded of this, bear patiently whatever he may put upon thee; take every affliction for the honour and glory of God and for the remission of thy sins.

3. Take heed never to murmur against God, nor to blame his judgements: for although they may be hidden, unknown, yea, even incomprehensible to us, yet they are in themselves always just and ordered by the highest wisdom.* Never imagine that anything happeneth in the world by chance and

* *Cf.* Ps. cxviii 75, 142.

without the providence of God, but be wise enough to remember in all things the order of God, without whom not so much as a single leaf can fall from a tree. God indeed, who hath created all things, doth govern and rule all things, from the highest angel down to the very least worm of the earth. If thou dost undoubtingly believe this great truth, thou wilt find it more easy to preserve a calm and undisturbed mind amidst all the changes of this passing world.

SECTION II

RESIGNATION

1. Acknowledgement of thine own nothingness.
2. Avoid obstinacy in thine own opinion.
3. Resign self, judgement and desires to God's will.

1. Be always, I pray thee, of good and resigned will and truly humble. Never think thyself to be anything, but remain always little, yea, nothing in thine own eyes and thine own opinion. Have no great idea of the good things thou art able to do, knowing well that they are full of defects; but, on the other hand, think highly of the good deeds of others, and prefer them to thine own best actions. Be not puffed up by any vain conceit, at any gift God may have bestowed on thee, for he that giveth consent to any

thought of vainglory befouleth the face of his soul with a hideous stain.

2. Carefully shun stubbornness and all obstinacy in thine own opinion, for such a tone of mind is a serious impediment to the grace of God and spiritual progress. Avoid also all unbecoming disputes, being willing rather to seem overcome than to lose any of the holy virtue of humility. Even if for the defence of the true faith thou art sometimes obliged to assert something in strong words, take care to avoid pride and speak not in a haughty or excited manner.

3. In doubtful matters seek with a lowly mind to know the Will of God from someone who hath the fear of God, and God himself will direct and guard thee. Learn promptly to lay aside thine own judgement, thy will and thy desires for God. And since it may be difficult always to know for certain what desires come from God, it is well even in those things which seem right to stand resigned to God, and to say to him: "O Lord, not what I will, but what thou wilt be done. Let that be done which will give thee more honour."

SECTION III

OBEDIENCE

1. Its exceeding merit.
2. An example of secret disobedience.
3. Bear reproof with sweetness.

1. Be always ready to obey. For the least thing done from the true principle of obedience pleaseth God more than what may appear far more important springing from self-will. Better is it from simple obedience to pick up leaves from the ground, than from self-love to indulge in high contemplation of heavenly truths; and that man will obtain more divine grace who from pure obedience should eat soberly and guardedly for the honour of God than if, to gratify his own will, he should embrace a rule of most strict abstinence. So pleasing to God is the sacrifice of our own will, of our own opinion, and self-denial rather than self-seeking. Obedience is the eldest daughter of humility; it renders a man ready to receive every grace, and is the safest way to heaven.

2. He who will not obey where obedience is a duty, but showeth himself unyielding, insolent, and stubborn with his superiors, is a great enemy of God. A certain virgin of remarkable holiness saw in spirit the soul of a monk most severely punished in purgatory.

As the monk had been looked on as a man of good life, the virgin asked God why his soul was unable to enter heaven. Our Lord answered thus: "This monk used to be unwilling humbly to conform himself in all good things to the will of his abbot and superior, and to practise obedience. Whatever the abbot did displeased him, for he considered himself much wiser than his superior, and judged that he could have done better."

3. If it should come to pass that thou art reproved for anything, receive the reproof calmly; sweetly and willingly acknowledge thy fault. If it should ever be necessary to make some excuse, do so shortly, modestly, and humbly.

SECTION IV

FLEE FROM VAINGLORY

1. Seek not to please men, but God only.
2. Be content, for Christ's sake, with poor things.
3. Oppose the first beginning of temptation to vainglory.
4. Humility heavenly, self-love diabolical.

1. Do not desire to be admired and held in honour by men. If perchance some of thy praiseworthy actions are seen by others, take good heed not to do them in order that others may see them, or praise them, or look on thee as holy, but that they may give glory to God,

and that others may be edified and give praise to God. Directly thou dost detect any kind of desire of vainglory arising in the soul, check it at once, and rejecting and casting away all impure desire, turn to God and look at him and his honour. Better is it for thee to be despised than to be praised, to be under others than to rule.

2. Be nothing loth to undertake low and humbling duties, for the love of the heavenly King, Jesus Christ, who for thy sake humbled himself in exceeding great measure. Lower thyself beneath all men; and dwell in the quiet vale of humility, the safest of all possible places. Look upon thyself as a vile and worn-out rag which anyone may trample upon or tear up as he list.

3. If in words, actions, or any other way it should occur to thee to try and please any mortal man and not purely to seek God and his honour, promptly condemn and abhor this in thyself, cast it out as a most impure suggestion of pride and a depraved intention of soul. Instantly mortify any tendency thou mayest detect to vainglory, boasting, or self-conceit.

4. Remember that our Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed angels and all the citizens of heaven are humble and hold pride in abomination. On the other hand, the evil spirits are

proud and abhor humility. Take care, then, to be like the former and to separate thyself from the latter. Be absolutely certain that it is not possible to live to God unless we become humble and resigned, and unless we strive to die to the rebellious inclinations of our nature. The true love of God can only grow in our souls in just that degree in which the baleful love of ourselves, by which we wrongfully seek ourselves and turn to ourselves, is lessened.

CHAPTER III

HOW A SPIRITUAL MAN SHOULD BEHAVE TO HIS NEIGHBOUR, AND WHAT DUTIES HE HAS TO HIM

SECTION I

AFFECTIONS OF THE HEART

1. Love all with true charity.
2. All are in a wonderful way images of God.
3. The beauty of the soul, even in a deformed body.
4. A good man in a deformed body, more comely than a sinful man of the most handsome appearance.

1. CHRIST, our Lord, saith in the Gospel: *This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you.** And in another place likewise: *By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.*†

Do thou, therefore, take care to love all men, even enemies and those that oppose thee, with sincere charity; yea, love them as brothers and sisters, having the same heavenly Father and the same Creator and Redeemer as thyself.

2. Think within thyself how noble are the souls of men, created after the image and likeness of God, and capable of attaining ever-

* John xv 12. † John xiii 35.

lasting happiness, and let this consideration incite thee to look upon them with love and honour. For God hath made angels and men to his own image and likeness, bestowing on them reason and intelligence, by which gifts they possess a wonderful dignity, and far excel all other creatures of God.

3. When thou seest a man with a deformed or sickly body, take heed not to love him the less on that account. Look not so much at his mortal and corruptible body, but consider rather the beauty of his immortal soul. For so great is the loveliness and beauty of the rational soul when not stained by sin, that a man who clearly perceived it would be lost in wonder and so carried away by the brightness of the vision that he would not know where he was.

4. True beauty is spiritual and is seen by the eye of the mind. A man, uncomely in face, but righteous, ought to be greatly preferred to one however fair in countenance but wicked in life and conduct. In truth, the first is far the fairer of the two. For the body of a righteous man, which may now appear deformed, and even horrible, will soon rise again in glory. Therefore be careful to love every human creature with true charity according to the command of God.

SECTION II

OUTWARD CONDUCT

1. Show not a bitter countenance to anyone.
2. Beg the virtue of meekness from God.

1. Look not on others with a sour countenance, treat them not sternly and bitterly; but, full of the fruit of goodness, show thyself to one and all cordial, sweet, kind, affable, and ready to help. And if perchance passion should suddenly be kindled and should move thee to anger and bitterness against anyone, take good heed not to consent to this vice. Fight strongly against it; soften and, if possible, extinguish it altogether, grieving that there is still so much bitterness in thy heart.

2. Humble thyself, and beg the help of God. When he shall have poured into thy soul the sweetness of charity in abundant measure, thou wilt not feel so much of thy native bitterness. God often allows even his own chosen friends to be easily moved to anger, in order that they may know themselves more truly and that their humility may become more genuine.

SECTION III

WORKS OF MERCY

1. Be kind to all, enemies above all.
2. Those in distress, poverty and sorrow.
3. Help the souls suffering in purgatory.

1. WITH a ready will fly to the help of those who may need thine assistance. To those in particular who have shown hatred towards thee or who have vexed thee, be friendly in heart, in face, and in words. Do good to such as these so long as they are in any need, and pour forth prayers for them faithfully to God, as Christ himself admonishes us, saying: *Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you.**

2. The tempted, the sorrowful, in fact, all who are in any kind of trial, treat with a heart full of mercy. The troubles of the poor take care to help by alms, cheerfully given, to the best of thy power. Whatever thou bestowest on the poor, believe that thou givest unto Christ.

3. Send also thy spiritual alms to help the souls of the faithful detained in the pains of purgatory, praying devoutly for them. Whatsoever thou art able lovingly to do for their

* Matt. v 44.

forgiveness and refreshment, Christ, who has an intense love for them, will accept just as if thou hadst come to him in prison in order to free him. For these souls belong to the mystical Body of Christ, and Christ in the Gospel hath declared that we give to him whatsoever we give to his members. Whence he saith: *I was in prison, and you came unto me.**

SECTION IV

LOVING-KINDNESS

1. Wish well to all.
2. Quickly forgive and be a peace-maker.
3. Despise no one and despair of no one.

1. MOST earnestly desire the salvation of all, and never imagine the loss of one single rational soul to be a light matter. One soul created after the image and likeness of God is more excellent and ought to be considered of more value than the whole visible world. We are all members of one Body, of which the Head is Christ. We must, therefore, take care never to wish or desire evil to anyone, nor to envy anyone, but always to rejoice in the good of others. Take heed never willingly to do an injury to anyone, nor by imprudence to trouble or grieve any-

* Matt. xxv 36.

one. Do not easily blame others, and, as far as possible, live at peace with all.

2. If it should come to pass that any little difference should arise with a neighbour or even a more serious quarrel, be most anxious for a speedy reconciliation, and, with that humble spirit which becomes a true servant of Christ, do all in thy power to restore friendship. In the case of others engaged in any quarrel strive to bring them back to peace and charity, both by prayer to God and any other likely way.

3. Take care never to treat others with disdain or contempt, for such a spirit is utterly contrary to humility and charity. Despair not of the salvation of anyone living in this world, for however wicked he may now be, he may presently, by God's grace, become righteous. The bridge of God's mercy is not yet broken down, but still offers a safe road to those who repent.

SECTION V

COMPASSION

1. Compassion for sinners.
2. Zeal for others' salvation.
3. Brotherly reproof.
4. Our own faults.

1. SHOW loving compassion and merciful feeling not only to the sorrowful, but also to sinners. Sigh over the ignorance and blindness of the heart of man. Remember always how great is the malice of the devil, who constantly tempts men; and, on the other hand, how weak and prone to evil is poor human nature. Take as mild a view as possible of the sins of others, and excuse them as far as truth will allow; but as to thine own faults take a strict view and accuse thyself sharply.

2. It is quite a false idea to imagine that the salvation of others is a matter that concerns thee not, for it is a duty diligently and lovingly to labour for it, even if thou art in no position of authority. Pray much, therefore, for sinners, and strive to be of use to all, for thus special graces can be merited from God.

3. From a motive of zeal for righteousness and the honour of God withhold not brotherly reproof when a fitting occasion offers. On the other hand, beware of consenting to the

sins of others and never flatter thy neighbour. If thou allowest thy wrath to be kindled in order to reprove or chastise an ill-doer, be angry without any gall of bitterness or hatred. Make war against sin in a man in such a way as not, on account of sin committed, to hate the man whom God has made. Hate the fault, but not the man. For if hatred against the man himself be indulged thou art lost, for thou art then living out of charity, and thou wilt not be able to attain to salvation, unless, laying aside all hatred, thou comest back once more to holy charity. For, as John the apostle saith: *He that loveth not, abideth in death.** Most certainly such a one abideth in death, because charity is the life of the soul, and God is charity. If thou dost desire God to be kind and merciful towards thee, so must thou also be kind and merciful towards others.

4. If only thou wouldst carefully examine thyself, and thus come to the knowledge of the many vices and sins that once abounded, or perhaps still do abound in thee, and how far thou still art from that purity, holiness, and faithfulness which thou owest to thy God, thou wouldst then, forsooth, find it easy to bear calmly the troublesome shortcomings of others, as far as good sense and kindness may

* 1 John iii 14.

allow. Confess that thou thyself, through thine own wicked and careless life, art the cause why others advance so little in spirit and so often displease God.

SECTION VI

DO NOT BLAME OTHERS

1. Do not lightly suspect evil.
2. Meddle not with others' business.
3. Be not fretful and given to murmuring.

1. As far as possible look favourably on the doings and sayings of others, and beware of lightly forming an evil opinion of them. When bad and absurd suspicions about other people enter the mind, immediately cast them out. Let them go as they came. Although sometimes the fear may arise in the mind lest the devil may have led a man astray or that some evil may be lurking in another's heart, no certain judgement should be formed unless the matter be quite evident. In this way abstain from rash judgements, and do not give way to idle curiosity about the defects of others, but let each one mind his own faults and judge himself.

2. Do not meddle unnecessarily with matters that concern thee not, but rather leave such things to be dealt with by those

who have care of them. Let good things pass as good: while evil things should not be easily condemned, but left to the judgement of God, who seeth most clearly the hearts of men and knoweth perfectly whatever is evil. When a man showeth a desire to mix himself up in matters of various kinds, to blame others, to talk of them and to judge theircon duct, he showeth how far he yet is from true knowledge of himself, from peace and purity of heart; he proveth himself to be still only on the threshold of the spiritual life.

3. Form the habit of living without many complaints. If perforce thou must complain, address thy complaints to God or to the blessed Virgin or to some saint, explaining to them humbly and calmly the matters that trouble and vex thee.

CHAPTER IV

SELF-GOVERNMENT

SECTION I

UNRULY LOVE OF THINGS CREATED

1. Adhere not to things created.
2. Use them, but abuse them not.
3. Avoid unruly love of others.
4. Love Christ only.

1. OFTEN call to mind that thou art a Christian, not so much for this present life, as for the life of the world to come, and therefore despising earthly and passing things, give thy heart to things heavenly and eternal. So noble is thy soul that it cannot be satisfied by all that is in this world. Fleeting things, pleasant things of a base nature, can never satisfy thy desires, but God only, the highest and everlasting good, can content thee; and this can only come to pass when thou hast been received into heaven and it is given thee to see God as he is. This earth is nothing but a miserable exile, a bitter winter; heaven is our true fatherland and the most delightful summer. This life, however much prolonged, is short indeed if we compare it to eternity: it can hardly be called a moment. How quickly do all the things of this world

pass by, fly away and fail! If thou art so foolish as to attach thyself to fleeting things, thou wilt pass away with them. Adhere and cleave to God, who remaineth always unchanged and never passeth away. What, I ask, would it profit thee to abound now in riches, honours, delights, and worldly pleasures, and hereafter to be cast into everlasting fire? Ponder, O my dearly beloved, ponder deeply this truth within thyself.*

2. Use, then, the created things of this world for the glory of God, but take good heed not to attach thyself to them by vicious affection. Keep thy soul as far as possible free and pure. Whatever beauty, gracefulness, or sweetness thou mayest see in things created, whatever fragrance of perfume, or harmony of sound, or other perfection, refer all to the Creator and the heavenly country, for from God floweth all beauty and sweetness of created things and all their perfection. Thou mayest indeed take a certain comfort from created things according to God; but beware of attaching thyself to them, and do not perversely seek thyself and thine own delight in them.

3. Take care, also, not to attach thyself with inordinate love to any man, even though he should be very devout and holy, and do not

* *Cf.* Ps. lxxii 23-28.

desire anyone thus to attach himself to thee, but be content with thy God, and put thy delights in him. It is not possible to express how much injury and how many dangers may arise to the soul from an unruly affection and love for any person, especially when it implies unrestrained familiarity with one not of the same sex. Love thyself and all other men, in God and for God, but God himself love for his own sake.

4. Love, I beseech thee, Jesus Christ, thy sweet Maker and Redeemer, thine only treasure, thy true and most joyful good. If thou art not able to love him with a burning affection, at least love him as much as thou canst, and as much as he deigneth to give thee grace. Desire to love him as perfectly as it is his good pleasure thou shouldst love him. And if thou canst not feel this good desire, at least desire to have it. Say to thy loving Lord: "Good Jesus, I ought and I desire to love thee with my whole heart. Do thou thyself deign to supply whatever is wanting in my desire to love thee." Or: "O Lord, I know I ought to be humble, resigned, patient, kind, meek, modest, chaste, sober, cheerful, devout, and so I desire to be. Do thou, in thy great goodness, deign to supply whatever is wanting in me in respect to these virtues and good qualities." How-

ever many times, even thousands in one day, thou mayest make this petition lovingly and earnestly to Christ Jesus, so often, without doubt, will he offer himself for thee to his Father, and thus will he perfectly supply what is wanting in thee by his loving heart, by his humility, resignation, patience, kindness, and the rest.

SECTION II

MORTIFICATION OF PLEASURE

1. In lawful pleasures be sparing.
2. Advice to the married.

1. As a pilgrim and stranger in this world, despise all impure pleasures, those, I mean, of which God is not the cause; those which do not promote union with him and are not necessary for sustaining nature. If thou still thinkest highly of the delights of the flesh, and art too much given to them, thou dost not yet sufficiently understand that thou art here only as a pilgrim and a stranger.

2. Perchance thou wilt reply: "I have a wife, what then shall I do?" I answer, use thy wife chastely: do nothing shameful, and carefully shun anything forbidden by the law of God. If thy desire is to have children, be careful to restrain thyself within lawful

bounds. Remember that thou art a rational man, not a mere animal. Happy is the truly spiritual man, who meriteth sometimes to find by experience how far heavenly and divine pleasure exceeds mere earthly and carnal delight. Happy, indeed, is that man who, looking at the glory of the flesh and all the pomp and dignity of this world with enlightened eyes, acknowledgeth it to be all nothing; for, truly, is it not like a poor hedgerow flower, soon to wither and die?

SECTION III

UNLAWFUL vanity, luxury, and superabundance in clothing and furniture should not be sought for, but a sober moderation suitable to thy state of life.

SECTION IV

FOOD AND DRINK

IN matters of food and drink be moderate, and restrain disgraceful greediness and sensual pleasure in such things. If perchance the food laid before thee be simple and even coarse, do not murmur, thus losing patience and peace of mind, but receive the things given thee by the providence of God with a

thankful spirit. When better food is provided, *make not provision for the flesh in its desires*,* and adhere not to the earthly pleasure thou mayest feel. Be ashamed to indulge thy taste more than a moderate and reasonable necessity may demand, remembering thy Lord Jesus Christ, who for thy sake was given gall and vinegar to drink. Look on thyself as unworthy to be fed even with coarse black bread.†

2. If gluttony and unruly appetite should sorely tempt thee, it would be well to reflect how quickly this pleasure, for the moment so enticing, passeth away and how hurtful it is to indulge it. Of a surety if thou shouldst yield to it and fully satisfy it, thou wilt be obliged afterwards to regret it exceedingly, whereas, on the other hand, if thou restrainest thine evil desires for God's sake and keepest thyself clean, thou wilt afterwards feel joy in thy heart. In order to nourish devotion of soul while eating, thou canst (if not prevented) mentally dip each mouthful in the precious Blood of Christ, and drink each draught as if from his crimson wounds. It is well also while eating to dwell in mind upon some words such as these: " O my beloved Jesus, may the power of thy divine love incorporate

* Rom. xiii 14.

† *Cf.* Ps. lxviii 22; John xix 29.

me and make me one with thee"; while drinking, words like these: "May the sweetness of thy divine love, O most loving Jesus, flow into the very centre of my soul and penetrate my whole being to thine eternal praise." In those places where there is holy reading during meals, attend to what is read as far as possible.

3. When the bounds of strict moderation have been slightly surpassed, a thing that may often happen even to a devout man, humbly beseech the most kind God to forgive this want of mortification, and, thus cleansed, be of good heart. A man who, neglecting the rules of sobriety, should, after the manner of hogs, gorge himself with meat and drink, leaveth no place within him for the Holy Spirit and the grace of God.

4. On the other hand, it is evidently fitting to allow the poor body certain comforts in the way of eating, drinking, resting, sleeping, and taking care of health, with a pure intention. A certain virgin, of much holiness, when she allowed some such reasonable indulgence to her body, used to rejoice as if she had done this to Christ himself, who said: *Because you did it to one of these, my least brethren, you did it unto me ;** for she looked upon herself as one of his least. Refresh and revive, there-

* Matt. xxv 40.

fore, thy poor body with sober moderation, to the eternal praise of God, in union with that love with which our sweet Jesus, made man for thy sake, deigned while on earth to eat, to drink, to rest, and to sleep; and in union with that same love offer to him the bodily comforts thou dost allow thyself. For while in the manner now described we make a holy use of these things, and join them to the loving charity of Christ, offering them with prayer and desire to God, they become very pleasing to him and fruitful to ourselves.

SECTION V

GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE

1. Our talk should be serious, not idle.
2. Without offence to others.
3. Truthful and far from any appearance of falseness.
4. Evil conversation should be turned to good.

1. LET thy conversation be guarded, becoming, moderate, and blameless. Love a reasonable silence. Do not utter things completely idle or too frivolous, avoiding what may cause unrestrained laughter in others. Christ said in the Gospel: *I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgement.**

* Matt. xii 36.

2. Avoid also words that are too harsh and satirical, and abominate the vice of detraction and slander. If necessity or some evident utility should force thee to speak of the faults of another person, see that thou dost not bring forward anything unnecessary or with any uncharitable intention. Beware lest any bitterness of mind or malice should be the true motive of speaking.

3. Also take heed not to affirm as certain, things which really are not certain to thine own mind. Fly most carefully every lie, all kinds of hypocrisy, deceit, wicked pretence, and craft. For God doth not admit into his kingdom any except the straightforward and guileless and those whose minds are averse from all deceit.

4. If someone else should speak detracting words or talk in an evil and improper way, cut short the conversation as quickly as possible, or even reprove the speaker in a modest and prudent manner. In a case where this cannot discreetly be done, at least show by countenance, by a sigh, by turning away or some other sign, that these words which displease God are also displeasing to thee, and close at least the ears of thy mind, so as not to consent to evil conversation.

SECTION VI

CUSTODY OF THE SENSES

Use the senses according to right reason.

WITH all diligence watch over thy tongue and the five senses of the body—namely, the sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Be careful not to indulge them except according to right reason. For if thou lovest much idle talking and art given to the indulgence of the senses, so as to seek pleasure from them, without restraint, thou wilt not be able to make any advance in true virtue, and the grace of God will be wanting to thee, for through the senses will it leak away.

SECTION VII

OUTWARD BEARING

IN outward bearing and movements of the body be calm and grave. If thou showest a certain moderate cheerfulness to those with whom thou livest, with due regard to time and place, thou dost well. Take diligent care not to give offence to anyone through thine own fault by anything said or done.

SECTION VIII

RULES FOR THOUGHTS

1. Purity of thought most important.
2. Vileness of impure delight.
3. Remedies for bad thoughts.

1. In thought and affection be innocent and pure. Whenever thou feelest any evil thought or foul imagination or vain joy to have crept into thy heart or any impure affection to have sprung up, blush with shame and turn away promptly and simply, looking at God with the eye of the soul or at something perfectly innocent or signing thyself with the holy and saving cross.

2. In the fight against disgraceful inclinations and against the sting of the flesh, it is no small advantage to think how vile and passing is all carnal pleasure, and how corruptible is the flesh itself. For what at best is the flesh, however fair and comely it may seem, but foulness and odious corruption? If the skin, so thin and frail, be torn off, what remains of the beauty it displayed, what but hideous deformity? Death must come, and then the flesh becomes a vile corpse.

3. Against these temptations also the Hail Mary devoutly said is a wonderful help; also calling on the saints to pray; also a fear and

horror at the thought of losing God's grace; moreover, the thought of how dreadful it would be to find oneself separated for ever from God and all his friends, and to be punished, with the devil, by everlasting torments in hell. But the easiest and happiest way of overcoming the evil spirit suggesting bad thoughts is to be in the habit of despising them as we do flies buzzing about the head. This is better than to try to answer the tempter's bad suggestions by a multitude of reasons.

CHAPTER V

COUNSELS ABOUT DISCRETION

SECTION I

SHUN SINGULARITY

It is of importance to be in all our works and outward occupations discreet, prudent, thoughtful, and vigorous, and in whatever we are doing to preserve a calm spirit and a peaceful heart. Worship God and serve him, not in a negligent and careless way, but devotedly and diligently. Carefully shun the vice of singularity. Those who dwell in monasteries, and whose duty it is to live according to a common and approved rule, ought especially to avoid this vice. There are some men who become marvellously well pleased with themselves if they can manage to do anything not done by the rest. They take more credit to themselves if they have fasted one day on which others did not, than if they kept ten ordinary fast days with the rest of the community. But such men miserably deceive themselves.

SECTION II

AUSTERITY

ALTHOUGH thou hast read and heard that many holy men have led lives of extreme strictness, and though a great sensible fervour may urge thee on in the beginning of thy conversion to embrace an unusual austerity, take care not to follow this impulse of fervour incautiously, but seek counsel from wise and experienced men. What holy and perfect men have done they certainly were led to do by an evident inspiration and drawing of the Holy Ghost. The real point is to mortify vices, not to weigh down the poor body, nor to destroy the natural powers. A cross or trial sent by God is borne with far greater safety than that which a man puts on his own shoulder.

SECTION III

GOD THE END OF LIFE

1. Seek to please God.
2. Intention to please God makes the least thing noble.

1. WHATEVER thou dost or leavest undone, do it or leave it undone for the honour and glory of God, so that in all things the eye of thine

intention may be simply and purely on God, and thy soul may be bound to him by the noble cord of good will, never knowingly and wilfully seeking thyself. As soon as ever a man detecteth in himself any ill-regulated self-seeking, he should at once turn from it and mortify himself, for self-seeking and self-will corrupt our good works, making them rotten. On the other hand, true self-denial maketh an exceedingly pleasant music in the ears of God, and in a marvellous manner pleaseth his Majesty. If only one Hail Mary were recited by a man with self-denial for the eternal praise of God, it would be more pleasing to God and more useful to the soul than to recite the whole psalter many times with self-love and self-seeking.

2. No action is so trifling as not to be very profitable to the soul, if only it be directed purely to God. He therefore who placeth one little flower on an altar for God's sake, or should adorn the image of a saint with a sincere and devout intention, will receive a very great reward. Yea, he who only boweth his head or bendeth the knee in God's honour will not lose his reward. Desire, then, and beg of God that the highest praise may be given to him, thy Creator, by all thy words, all thy steps, all the movements of thy body, and by every morsel of food that thou eatest.

Desire and beg that every breath, day and night, may honour and glorify God, and show him love. Verily all that thou shalt desire and ask with a right and holy intention, shall be granted to thee.

SECTION IV

ASK FOR GRACE

1. In all things ask the help of God's grace.
2. The drawing of the Holy Ghost should be observed.
3. But in difficult matters seek advice.

1. WHEN thou dost desire to undertake anything, raise thy heart to the Lord, seeking counsel from him and calling upon him, knowing well that thou canst not do or say anything acceptable to him, except by the help of his grace.

2. Listen carefully to what God may say in thy heart, whether he doth allow thee to do this or that, and whether right reason prompteth thee to it. When thou art uncertain whether thine inclination be from God or not, examine whether thou really dost desire to embrace God's will if it were plainly manifested. If thou findest that thy true desire is to do God's will, humbly beg of him to enlighten and teach thee. After this

thou canst confidently think that to be God's will to which thou art most drawn, always provided there be nothing in it against the teaching of Holy Scripture and the Church.

3. It is fitting, however, to seek light, as to the Will of God, from some God-fearing man who is enlightened in soul, and this more especially in intricate and difficult matters, on account of the craft of the evil one who sometimes *transformeth himself into an angel of light.**

SECTION V

THE MERITS OF CHRIST

If only thou wilt take care to join and unite thy works and employments to the actions of Christ, and wilt thus offer them to the eternal praise of God, this offering, without doubt, will be most pleasing to him, and thy works will be clothed with an unspeakable dignity and glory from the actions of Christ with which they are joined.

* 2 Cor. xi 14.

CHAPTER VI

COMFORT FOR THE TEMPTED

SECTION I

CUSTODY OF THE HEART

PRUDENTLY avoid all that may lead thee into sin and that company which is likely to turn thy soul from God, and be constantly anxious to keep purity of heart. Never presumptuously consider thyself secure, for this life is full of snares, temptations, and dangers, but ever work out thy salvation with a reasonable and holy fear.* For most true are the words of the wise man: *Unless thou hold thyself diligently in the fear of the Lord, thy house shall quickly be overthrown.*† When, however, through human weakness, thou fallest into sin, when on account of the temptations to vice that attack thee thou seemest to thyself rather to be slipping back than going forward, in no way be discouraged, but groaning in spirit at the feet of Jesus thy Lord, beg him to blot out all stain of sin by his most pure Blood and to confirm thee by his grace in all good.

* *Cf.* Phil. ii 12. † Ecclus. xxvii 4.

SECTION II

DESIRE FOR SORROW

Be not troubled in mind because perchance thou dost not feel sorrow or contrition. For if thy real desire and will is that thou hadst never offended God, or even if thou art sorry that thou art not sorry, this sorrow is favourably received by God, who looketh rather to thy will than thy feelings. Often say these or the like words: " O Lord Jesus, would that I had never offended thee. Would that I could henceforth live according to thy most gracious Will, pleasing thee." That contrition is excellent to which love, hope, and humble trust in God are joined. Lighter sins are certainly much more quickly and effectually blotted out by a humble acknowledgement of the fault and turning promptly and lovingly to God, than by occupying the mind with them and thinking of them for long with much faint-heartedness and trouble.

SECTION III

FALLS FROM WEAKNESS

1. Falls from weakness.
2. Falls from negligence.

1. AGAIN, it must be remembered that there is a great difference between falling into venial sins from weakness and sudden surprise, and committing them from mere gross negligence. For he who sins only from weakness and through being off his guard, although being taken unawares he may fall, yet his heart is free from bad will and not held captive by inordinate attachment to any created thing. His soul is in readiness also to leave anything which he certainly knoweth that God willeth him to leave. In spite, however, of this good will, through weakness he easily transgresseth,* when occasion offers, either by being puffed up by self-conceit, or by impatience, or by sloth and idleness, or by frivolous words and too much talking, or by sensual and carnal affection, or by being unrestrained in eating and drinking, or indulging too much in natural high spirits, or by being too anxious and preoccupied, and in many other ways. But, as these and similar things are from weakness and surprise,

* *Cf.* Ps. vi 2.

as soon as he returneth to himself he will be sorry he did not more carefully watch over himself, and will turn at once away from the slightest sin. Thus he will quickly obtain pardon from God, for his heart is not corrupted, his sins and vices cleave to him less, and stand less in the way of God's grace within his soul.

2. But, on the other hand, he who is wilfully and knowingly held captive by the love of things created, and in these things seeketh delight and pleasure in an irregular way, such a man, in truth, sins from mere gross negligence. For even when out of any opportunity of sin, when he is quiet and free within himself, he still very much desireth those occasions, and the faults that he ought to hate he esteems as mere trifles and careth not to correct. The plain conclusion is that the heart, or will, of such a man is impure. However, he also will obtain pardon if, after his fall, he should conceive true contrition and determination to amend.

SECTION IV

FIGHT WITH TEMPTATION

1. Mere temptation does not displease God.
2. Temptation conquered purifieth the soul.
3. Mere dreams defile not a man.
4. First motions of anger, etc., when fought against, purify the soul.

1. It is one thing to be attacked by temptations to vice, another to be overcome. As long as thou dost not consent, as long as these vices displease thee, and thy reason and will oppose them, there is no manner of estrangement from God, however much they may attack thee and however troublesome they may become. Some servants of God are of a calm and placid nature within and without, and consequently feel not the attacks of vice in any violent way. Others, when occasions arise, are more violently tempted, being naturally inclined to pride, vainglory, anger, gluttony, impurity, and the rest; but, though tempted strongly, they in no way desire to give any consent to these sins. For when they feel these evil movements they immediately cast aside with loathing all that is displeasing to God and hurtful to their souls, and, hating all sensuality, fly to God within their souls by faith and humble prayer. These men are often more praiseworthy

before God, and have more excellent virtue than the men of weaker passions. Perfect virtue is the fruit of lawful conflict. Yea, it may even come to pass that a man who hath to fight stubbornly against vice may indeed have to remain longer in purgatory; but when at last he hath been thoroughly purified, he may rise to a far higher degree of glory in heaven than another man, who endured no such sharp encounter, although he might have gone straight to heaven without any purgatory. Therefore let not the force of temptation discourage thee.

2. Even if, in the lower and sensitive powers of the soul, which we share with the brute animals, very strong tendencies to different vices should be experienced but not consented to by the will: even if the most unclean imaginations or unheard-of blasphemies against God and his saints should constantly crowd in upon thy mind against thy will, they would not stain but cleanse thy soul, and would gain for thee glorious crowns in heaven. Many very holy men are so tormented by temptations of this kind that they actually are not able to say even an Our Father or Hail Mary without these diabolical suggestions. Such men, weighed down with inexpressible anxiety of mind, think themselves guilty of many crimes, but before God

they are illustrious martyrs. On account of these suggestions, distresses, and afflictions, prayer must not be abandoned (although filled with numberless distractions), nor should any good work be neglected. He who even once should consent to vain self-conceit becometh more hideous in God's eyes than he would by feeling the worst possible suggestions for many years, if only the will did not consent. Let the evil spirits rage as they like, let the sting of the flesh be as troublesome as possible, the soul, as long as it doth not embrace evil with a deliberate will, doth not forfeit the grace of God. The reason is often so taken unawares by these troublesome suggestions, evil thoughts, and pleasure, that a good man may direct his mind to them without free will and deliberation; but as soon as ever he becometh fully aware of the nature of his thoughts, he turneth away at once and doth not consent to the pleasure which had slunk in unawares.

3. If in sleep, when the reason cannot act, some bad dream should present itself to the mind, do not be afraid or cast down, as long as when awake and in full possession of reason, the soul turneth promptly away from what is evil. Sin is so entirely a matter of the will that if a thing is not voluntary it cannot be sinful.

4. As this is so important to understand, I again repeat for thy comfort this principle. If on account of an injury inflicted on thee, or of evil things said of thee or thine, or from any other cause whatsoever, a fierce storm of anger should arise within thee, or a temptation to wish anyone evil, or to envy another man, should arise, while at the same time thou art highly displeased with thyself and dost try as far as possible to keep down the vice arising in thy soul, striving by humble confession and prayer to expel and mortify it, no spiritual injury need be feared. The tempest rageth only in the lower region of the soul, but in the higher region reason remaineth calm and the will uncorrupted and unvanquished. Nothing whatever can separate thee from the friendship of God, except wilful consent to sin. Neither the devil nor any other creature can force a soul to consent to sin, since it hath free will, which God is ever ready to strengthen by his grace, lest it might fall away by consent. And even if consent should be given to sin, the soul can, by God's help, immediately return to his favour by true contrition and penance.

SECTION V

PERSEVERANCE

1. Persevere in spite of weakness.
2. Scripture promises.
3. God in himself is not terrible.

1. STAND bravely, therefore, in thy holy purpose, even if a thousand times in one day thou shouldst fall. Hope firmly in the Lord, who always giveth pardon most kindly to a man of good will, humbly acknowledging his fault. Certainly it can in no wise ever come to pass that a humble man should be cast out by him and perish.* Oh, if only we were enlightened within our souls by the light of his grace, we should in some measure know and feel how merciful, loving, sweet, and good is Jesus, and without any doubt we should feel a deep and loving trust in him, and exceedingly should we rejoice. This joyful trust would by no means make us inclined to be lazy or careless in a good life, but would render us far more vigorous and diligent. Jesus is so kind that he often sweetly visiteth a man and giveth him comfort with grace, although he knoweth that this man will soon fall into sin. Oh, how willingly doth he receive us, if, rising after a

* *Cf.* John vi 37.

fall, we go back to him humbly and lovingly! Then with great joy do the angels and the other citizens of heaven rejoice, for they also are, in the highest degree, kind and merciful, and embrace our souls with genuine charity.

2. He who laboureth under the weight of an inordinate fear of damnation, and yet is striving as far as possible to lead a good life, ought prudently to turn away the eyes of his soul from too much consideration of the just judgements of God. He ought, without any doubt, to believe the Holy Scriptures, which abound in heavenly comfort. Whose soul will not be refreshed by those sweet words of the prophet:

The Lord is gracious and merciful:
Patient and plenteous in mercy.
The Lord is sweet to all:
*And his tender mercies are over all his works.**

And again:

As far as the east is from the west:
So far hath he removed our iniquities from us.
As a father hath compassion on his children:
So hath the Lord compassion on them that fear him.†

Let those men fear and dread the severity of the judgement of God who, neglecting God and despising his commandments,

* Ps. cxliv 8, 9. † Ps. cii 12, 13.

remain in their iniquities and will not amend their lives. Of such men, in good truth, did blessed Paul speak when he thundered forth that terrible sentence: *Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and patience and long-suffering? Knowest thou not that the goodness of God leadeth thee to penance? But according to thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest up for thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgement of God.**

But the same Paul wonderfully comforts those who abandon their sins and strive to live according to the spirit, in these words:

There is now, therefore, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh.†

A man of good will must in no way imagine that God is cruel; his nature is goodness itself, and his loving-kindness and mercy are every day clearly experienced by us all.

3. When in Holy Writ he is called terrible, and when anger and fury are attributed to him, these terms are used to express his spiritual operations and the effects of his justice. For God is unchangeable; he is not influenced by passion or emotion; he is always perfectly calm in himself; he remaineth ever one and the same. Therefore is it

* Rom. ii 4, 5. † Rom. viii 1.

written of him in the Book of Wisdom: *Thou being Master of power, judgest with tranquillity.**

SECTION VI

TRUST IN GOD

STURDILY resist the temptation to despair and want of confidence. Do what thou canst to advance more and more, but trust not to thine own labour and endeavour, but in the help of the Lord thy God, for they who trust in themselves fall away, since man can do nothing good of himself.

SECTION VII

PRAYER

1. Confident prayer hath great power.
2. Always answered.
3. Prayer should be made intellectually rather than by material imaginations.

1. ASK earnestly of God that he would be pleased to kill within thee and utterly to take away from thee whatever displeaseth him; beseech him to make thee a man after his own heart. For with faith and perseverance in

* Wisd. xii 18.

humble petition and prayer, thou wilt without doubt obtain what is good for thy salvation, according to the promise of Christ: *Ask, and you shall receive;** and again: *Whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.*† It is, therefore, perfectly certain that, if not at once, still at the right time, thou wilt obtain by prayer what is useful for thee, and what thou art able to hope for with well-ordered and unshaken confidence. Supposing two men were to pour forth petitions to our Lord, and one of them were to ask for a favour so great that it might seem almost impossible to be granted, but with firm confidence that he will be heard by God, while the petition of the other was for a very small thing, with less confidence in our Lord; the first will be far more quickly heard on account of his confidence than the other whose petition is small and his confidence weak.

2. Where a man devoutly asketh for something not well for him to have, God will give him other things better for him. He is a most loving Father: if thou shouldst ask him for spiritual gold, and he doth not grant thy petition, the reason is because thou, his little child, knowest not how to use this spiritual treasure in a wise manner; but be assured that

* John xvi 24. † Matt. xxi 22.

as often as thou shalt pray for one gold piece, he will store up for thee a hundred in heaven. It cannot possibly happen that even the very least little prayer rightly said, or the least sigh or groan offered lovingly to God, can pass away without much fruit.

3. Often recite that prayer so excellent in itself, and so sweet in the ears of God, which our Lord Jesus Christ first uttered with his own sacred mouth and taught us his children to say.* In praying to God it is better not to form any bodily and imaginary image of him, but believing him to be purely spiritual, adore him and pray to him in spirit and in truth.† Conceive an idea of him in mind as the incomprehensible substance; contemplate him as the highest good, the highest love, and the highest intellectual light most truly worthy of love. Consider and mentally contemplate the Son of God, made Man for thee, as God and Man.

* *Praeceptis salutaribus moniti et divina institutione formati, audemus dicere.*—Instructed by thy saving commands and following thy divine instructions, we dare to say.

† *Cf.* John iv 24.

CHAPTER VII

COMFORT FOR THOSE WHO ARE IMPERFECT, BUT OF GOOD WILL

SECTION I

IN ALL THERE IS IMPERFECTION

1. God allows imperfection in saints.
2. To keep them humble.

1. If thou canst not be as perfect as thou dost desire, humble thyself and be resigned. Rejoice from thy heart that some are perfect, glorify God and thank him for their perfection. But know this, that our Lord is generally pleased to allow some failing and imperfection to remain even in elect souls most dear in his sight. These defects make them vile in their own eyes and keep them humble. In reality they have true health of soul, and they have arrived at such a high degree of virtue that they would far rather suffer death itself than knowingly and wilfully sin against God, and yet not seeing that they are in good spiritual health they are always anxious and in fear, and are convinced that their souls are sickly and weak.

2. The most kind and wise Creator, in his great faithfulness and love towards them,

leaveth them, as long as they live, in this state of ignorance, fear, and anxiety. For clearly doth he see that they are so weak that, if they knew for certain that they were in strong spiritual health, they would at once begin to turn their eyes on themselves with vain self-conceit. Verily it is good for them to bear this misery, in which they resign themselves humbly to God. The loving Lord generally delivereth them at death from the darkness of this ignorance they have so long endured, bestowing on them firm confidence in him, with which they pass happily out of this life.

SECTION II

GOOD WILL

1. God never rejecteth it.
2. What it is.
3. The excellence of good works dependeth on it.

1. In no way ought the soul to be cast down on account of imperfections, for God cannot reject a man of good will. Thoroughly well doth he know our weakness, and graciously doth he comfort us in the Gospel, where we read that the holy angels sang at the birth of Christ these most delightful words: *Peace to men of good will.** They did not chant,

* Luke ii.

"Peace to men of great or perfect holiness" —though if they had it would have been most true—but to give comfort to the weak and to little ones, who are of good will, they sang with joy: *Peace to men of good will.*

2. If only thou dost what is reasonably in thy power, and dost truly desire to please God, he, without any doubt, will one day excellently crown thy striving labour, desire, and good will, even though there may be much inequality in thy good works, exercises, and prayers, and many defects may be mingled with them. For as long as thou dost not turn thy will from God, and dost often grieve over thine imperfections and mourn thine oft-repeated offences, God, in his unspeakable goodness, will consider thy works worthy of everlasting reward. As long, I repeat, as thou dost retain a good will, and dost cherish humility and other genuine virtues, and dost abstain carefully from sin, thou art pleasing God, and thou mayest live happily in thy good conscience as in a delightful paradise.

3. Be assured that all good depends on the will. When, therefore, a man desireth to have humility, charity, and other virtues, as long as he really doth desire it with his whole will, and doth what he is able to practise them, without any doubt he actually hath

these virtues. In like manner, when a man really desireth, with his whole soul, to do some good work, but cannot, God will accept the will for the deed. And in God's sight the will is as great as thou desirest it to be, and as thou truly wishest it to be.* Therefore a prayer like the following is most useful: "O Lord, would, oh would that I could have, for the honour of thy name, as much love and affection for thee as any creature ever had! Loving Jesus, I earnestly desire and beg that I may always tend towards thee with my whole will and with perfect desire, as is pleasing to thee. I beg and desire to please thee perfectly in all virtue and holiness in order to do thy gracious will."

SECTION III

MORTIFICATION

1. Internal mortification and external.
2. How to make the austerity of others our own.
3. Humility will make the imperfect the little ones of God.

1. BE not faint-hearted and imagine thyself far from God, because perchance thou art not able to lead a life of great austerity, or

* It is not presumption to soar high in desire, even if the desire should be impossible.—TRANSLATOR.

because thou dost not feel thyself in any way drawn or inspired to undertake such a life. True perfection, true holiness doth not consist in this, but in the mortification of the will and the vices, by true humility and charity. We are not told that the blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, led a life as rigid as that of the widow Judith; nevertheless, how much more holy was she than Judith! Not all the elect walk by the same path in their outward life; but in the hidden life of their souls, all, without exception, must follow the same way, that is, the way of humility and true charity or holy love. For example, St John the Baptist led a life completely different from that of St John the Evangelist; but, because both were really humble and loved God and their neighbour with true charity, both were highly pleasing to God.

2. Rejoice, however, and praise God, by whose grace many lead, or have led, very austere lives, for thus by pious congratulation and sincere love thou wilt make their merits in a certain sense thine own, and thou wilt have reward and glory from God for the good deeds which thou lovest, purely for his sake, in others. Further, instead of the austerity of life which thou lackest, thou canst offer to God the Father the fasts, watches, troubles,

and most bitter passion of Jesus Christ. If, on the other hand, thou art able to undertake a somewhat more strict life, by the help of God, do so simply for the glory of God, and take care not to lean upon or put any trust in this austerity or in thine own merits, but always put thy whole hope in the passion of Christ, in his satisfaction, expiation, and merits.

3. The imperfect have not much reason to fear as long as they are tending always towards better things (for they must never cast aside the holy fear of God); they need not, I repeat, give way to inordinate fear. For Christ loveth not only the eyes of his mystical body, that is, the perfect, but he loveth also the hands and the feet, the inferior members: he loveth the little vessels of mercy which he hath bought by his Blood and his death. The great among the sons of God walk and run forward readily, but the little ones advance slowly and with more difficulty. Blessed wilt thou be if thou art numbered even among the little ones, for they also are all heirs of the kingdom of heaven. He who created the great was the maker also of the little ones, and Christ was delivered up for the salvation of the least as much as for the greatest. He poured forth his Blood for all, he willed to redeem all by his death, and no

one is deprived of so great a benefit unless, by his own fault, he unhappily deprives himself of it.

SECTION IV

UNION OF OUR ACTIONS WITH THOSE OF CHRIST

1. Good will most rich in Christ.
2. Pray that Christ may enrich us by his merits.
3. God will never refuse what we ask in Christ's name.
4. The best thing is to unite our actions to those of Christ.

1. BELIEVE me that he who is truly humble and of good will, hath in Christ, according to the devout and sincere desire of his heart, whatever good he himself lacks. In Christ he hath all good and all perfection. For this purpose, in very truth, came Christ into this world; for this was he incarnate and suffered, that he might save sinners who humble themselves, lifting them up to everlasting happiness, that he might make satisfaction for them, that he might supply and repair their defects and might enrich them with his merits; as the most faithful father he lays up treasure for his children, whom he hath loved from eternity.

2. Beseech him, therefore, to answer, satisfy and supply for thee to the full; pray

him to adorn thy poor soul with his merits and virtues. And, having asked this, hope firmly and believe that he in his infinite goodness will really do what thou hast humbly asked. For if thou remainest doubtful and too full of fear, thou wilt be like a man who, having laid aside his own worn and stained garments and put on royal robes, knoweth not how to walk with dignity and grace, but advanceth in the clumsy and unpolished way in which he had been accustomed to behave. Offer to God the Father, as full expiation of thy sins and as supplying for the merits which thou dost lack, his only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Offer all the things he did and suffered for thee, his incarnation, life, labours, passion, torments, the blood and death of this thy Redeemer. The dignity and excellence of this offering is entirely incomprehensible to man. No crime, however grave, however enormous in guilt, can there possibly be which, by the merits of Christ and his precious Blood, cannot be blotted out in a man of good will.

3. Thou mayest also address God the Father thus: "Most merciful Father, I pray thee, through thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to have mercy on me, and to give me . . . to the eternal praise of thy name."

For whenever any petition is made in a

devout and loving way in the name of his Son or through his Son, God the Father is right well pleased with that petition, for no one can be dearer to him than his own Son.

4. Commend, then, thy good works and exercises to the most Sacred Heart, sweeter than honey, of the same Jesus Christ, to be amended and made perfect, for that most loving Heart earnestly desireth thee to do this and is always ready to perfect in the most excellent way thy defective works. Rejoice and exult, because, however poor thou art in thyself, thou art exceeding rich in thy Redeemer, who willed thee to have a share in his merits, who was for thee made Man, for thee fasted, laboured, bore torments, poured forth his Blood, and laid down his life. Thou hast indeed an incalculable treasure in him if only thou remainest truly humble and of good will.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SCHOOL OF HUMILITY AND PATIENCE

SECTION I

PRAISE OF HUMILITY

Oh, what great praise holy humility deserveth! Again and again would I admonish thee to cultivate this virtue with especial care, for Christ himself willed thee above all things to learn this of him, saying: *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart.** This virtue he ever taught by example and by word. Therefore he said again in another place: *Unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*† This virtue he looked down upon most lovingly in his Virgin Mother, as she herself declared, saying: *He looked down on the humility of his handmaiden.*‡ Through this virtue more than anything else, all saints were, and are, men according to God's heart. In short, in this virtue the whole discipline of Christian wisdom consisteth. If a man doth not desire humility, if he doth not strive to gain it, in vain doth he imagine that charity dwelleth in him and that the Holy

* Matt. xi 29. † Matt. xviii 3.
‡ Luke i 48.

Spirit findeth within him a pleasing abode, for he resteth not except with the humble. Charity is ever joined to humility, and humility to charity, and it cannot come to pass that anyone without humility can have charity. For, according to St Paul, *Charity is patient, is kind; is not puffed up, . . . is not ambitious, is not provoked to anger, but is patient and kind.** Without humility and charity thy works and exercises, however great they may seem, are empty and rotten. But true humility must be sought in the inmost heart; without this the mere outer appearance of it is nothing but hypocrisy.

SECTION II

THE CHIEF ACTS OF HUMILITY

1. To acknowledge that without God we are nothing.
2. That all our good is God's gift.
3. To feel we are worthy of contempt.
4. To consider afflictions as coming from our own sins.
5. To love even enemies after Christ's example.
6. To bear trials for the love of God.

1. THEREFORE have a humble heart subject to God. Acknowledge thine own nothingness, thy weakness, thy want of all power; acknow-

* 1 Cor. xiii 4.

ledge thine ingratitude to God, thy malice and vileness. Verily of thyself thou art nothing, and without the help of God's grace thou art unable to will anything good, to do any good thing, or even to have one holy thought. Of thyself thou art always inclined to evil, and, but for the protection of God, there is no crime so abominable that thou wouldst not commit. Wherefore do not prefer thyself to any man, however wicked. If thou hast not fallen into mortal sins, then certainly, on account of God's goodness, which hath not allowed thee thus to fall and hath given thee the grace of living a good life, thou hast far greater reason to humble thyself than hath another man who, after many grievous sins, hath obtained pardon and hath been received back into the grace of our Lord.

2. Since nothing in thee is truly thine own except sin, attribute anything good thou hast and any good action thou hast done to the mercy and kindness of God, seeking the praise and glory of God, not thine own. Beware of looking on one single shred of God's gifts as thine own property, for if one man alone had done all the good works of the whole world, still, as far as vain reputation and self-esteem is concerned, he should consider himself to have done nothing. As long as a man should imagine any of God's gifts to spring from

himself, and should take possession of them unlawfully as his own, and thus desire to be highly thought of by men on account of any grace of soul or body, much pride is certainly lurking within him. Great should be our hatred of this most baleful pest. If thou feelest it, consent not to its suggestions. Say to God: "O Lord, rather would I die than give consent; I renounce all unclean pride." Not only should we be careful not to attribute anything good to ourselves, but we may well consider ourselves to be in fault for all the evils in the world. We should confess ourselves to be in no way worthy of the benefits and gifts which we may receive from God, and we must be ever grateful to him, while we confess in our own minds that we are not worthy to live on the earth.

3. Verily, since thou hast by thy sins offended the majesty and holiness of the most high Lord, it would be only just if God himself and all created things were to unite in chastising thee in most painful ways. On this account, therefore, be not surprised or disturbed in mind if thou shouldst feel thy soul dry, barren, overclouded, unsteady, lonely, and as if forsaken by God. When also daily crosses, anxieties, and temptations press heavily upon thee, when other people despise, persecute, and even strike thee,

treating thee with contempt and abusing thee, be not cast down. Thou mayest imagine at such times that God is angry; but this is a fatherly anger, and cometh from love. Let not so amiable a Father displease thee, when he trieth thee or alloweth thee to be tried by adversities. Be calm, be patient, be resigned, and give thanks.

4. Encourage a certain moderate fear, knowing that God can see in thee many faults where thou perhaps canst only detect one or none. Fear, I repeat, and impute to thy sins those things which thou hast to bear, acknowledging that thou dost truly deserve still heavier crosses; but, on the other hand, in no way imagine that, because thou art chastised, thou art not dear to God. On the contrary, take this as a sign that thou art very dear to him, for *God scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.** Sing within thy heart those words of the prophet: *I will look towards the Lord : I will wait for God my Saviour : my God will hear me. . . . I will bear the wrath of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he judge my cause : he will bring me forth into the light, I shall behold his justice.*† Ask the Lord Jesus to make satisfaction for thy sins, and on thy part do thou bear patiently what thou hast to suffer.

* Heb. xii 6. † Mic. vii 7.

5. Moreover, forgive from thy heart those that trouble and injure thee; show kindness to them, returning good for evil, and bearing quietly and calmly their hard words, unkind gestures, harsh actions, and all bitterness shown to thyself or thy friends. And if all this should appear too difficult, set before the eyes of thy mind what our Lord Jesus Christ bore for thee, and the example that he gave thee.* When he suffered he did not murmur. He showed no anger, he sought not revenge; but with the utmost loving-kindness prayed for his enemies. Oughtest thou not to consider it to be an unspeakable good if in any way whatever thou art able to be like thy King?

6. Sometimes a good man, who is seeking God only, suffers from a heavy weight of anxiety and sadness. This may come from various causes, either from indisposition or natural constitution, from temperament, and from change in the weather; from the action of the evil spirit or some other cause allowed by God for his trial. Often when this happeneth, a man, thinking that God is not pleased with him, loseth his peace of heart and giveth way to sadness and trouble of mind. Now if this anguish should visit thee, do not try to shake it off with violence nor trouble thyself to think much about it, but receive

* *Cf.* 1 Pet. ii 23.

this trial humbly from the hand of God, as a thing most wholesome for thee, and bear it with a calm and resigned mind. Persevere in doing this even if the trial should last for many years or even during thy whole life. In this way God and his angels will dwell with thee, delighted at thy humility and patience.

SECTION III

THE VIRTUE OF PATIENCE

1. Suffering borne for God a sign of God's election.
2. God sendeth a successful issue to suffering.
3. All sufferings to be received from him.
4. Even when we suffer for our sins we should bear it for God.

1. SUFFERINGS in this life are most excellent gifts of God. No more certain sign is there of being chosen by God as one of his own than to bear trials humbly and with a resigned spirit for God's sake.* By cold and heat, by illness and other like trying things, whether of body or soul, doth God purify, sanctify, and in a wonderful way adorn the souls of his chosen ones. Those that in his eyes are not worthy to wear necklaces of gold, he is pleased to adorn at least with garlands of flowers—that is, with lesser trials. Never would he allow even the least breath of wind to be

* *Cf.* John xv 2.

irksome to his own, unless he saw that it would help on their salvation. It is more useful for a man to bear even a small trial patiently, for God's honour and love, than to perform great works. Humble patience and resignation in trials form a most sweet music in the ears of God, and bring him, at once, close to the afflicted man, according to the words of the prophet: *The Lord is nigh unto those that are troubled in heart.**

2. Whatsoever thou now sufferest, God from eternity hath foreseen that thou wouldst suffer in the very way in which thou dost suffer it; yea, the very day and hour in which thou art suffering it, he foresaw. There is, then, no reason to fear, for the loving Lord will put upon thee no cross too heavy for thy strength, which he hath perfectly measured. Most carefully doth he hold his hand between thee and the fire of tribulation, lest it should be more than thou canst endure, even as a most tender mother is wont to do when she undresses her baby son before the fire. Take care devoutly to offer to God for his everlasting praise every trial and suffering, small and great, joined and united to the passion and torments of Christ: in this way they will become of unspeakable merit and exceedingly pleasing to God.

* Ps. xxxiii 19.

3. Learn, I beseech thee, to receive all things that may happen to thee in soul or body from the hand of God only, for of a truth nothing can happen without his wise ordaining, nor can any kind of trial fall upon thee without his permission. If all the evil spirits wished to attack thee at once, they could not so much as draw near thee without the permission of God;* therefore, fear not them but God. As I have already said, learn to take all things from the hands of our loving Lord as a real good, even if this trial and sorrow should seem to be contrary to thy salvation. For it cannot come to pass that what is really the work of God's hand should not be the best and most useful thing for thee; for God never giveth anything to a man of good will, except what is best for him and most favourable to his salvation. This is as certain as the very existence of God himself. Yea, if he were to give power to Satan to vex thee in body for the whole remaining part of thy life in the hardest and most terrible ways, though thou wouldst probably be inclined to look upon this as an intolerable unhappiness and a dreadful judgement of God; yet, in reality, not only would it not stand in the way of thy salvation, but it would very much help it on, if only thou didst

* *Cf.* Job i.

take it from the hand of God, and didst endure it humbly for the honour and love of God.

4. This is true also of those trials and crosses that come through thine own fault and of which thou thyself art the cause. Do not look upon them as coming from any other source than the hand of the most loving God. The evils thou hast done should indeed always displease thee, nor in any way whatever shouldst thou put the blame on God, who is never the author of sin, nor on the devil, who cannot compel thee to sin; but impute all the guilt to thyself who didst consent to sin. Whatsoever painful or bitter things happen to thee from any created thing, turn at once the eyes of thy heart to thy heavenly Creator and Father, who alloweth this out of love. Look at him rather than at the created causes of thy suffering, for these are but instruments, the axes and mattocks used by the supreme Husbandman according to his will and in the way he sees to be useful for his chosen ones.* If, as often as men speak evil of thee or thine or do thee any hurt, thou art troubled and losest thy patience, this is a proof that the peace of thy soul doth not depend on God but on men. If this be the case, verily miserable art thou and most unhappy.

* *Cf.* Mic. vii 7.

CHAPTER IX

THE DOCTRINE OF RESIGNATION

1. Perfect resignation is the fountain of peace.
2. Hence in trials it giveth a certain taste of God.
3. It is the evident drawing and motion of God.
4. It is to love God's justice as well as his mercy.
5. God wills all good to us: he only requires resignation.
6. The safety of a resigned soul is most perfect.
7. And this even if life hath been ill-spent.
8. If not yet perfectly resigned, at least try to be.
9. A resigned man should cast away all sadness.

1. RESIGN thyself utterly to God, humbly subjecting and conforming thy will in all things to his will and holy Providence, ever worthy of all praise. Thus, and in no other way, wilt thou at last arrive at true and unmoved peace of heart. This is the certain sign that thou hast the genuine love of God. Therefore, whether God should send thee prosperity or adversity, whether he should will thee to live in light or in darkness, be ever content. Bear all uneven things evenly, as far as possible, with a calm mind, praising God and giving him thanks. When thou findest thyself wasting away in much darkness and dryness of soul, and pressed down to the earth by heavy anxieties, if then thou art conformed to the Will of God, bearing

thy misery and sorrow with gentle calmness for God's sake, thou art in truth far more pleasing to God than if thy soul were flooded with divine light and everything appeared to be in a flourishing state.

2. In trial and affliction a man cannot so easily seek himself, as when abounding in sensible sweetness and comfort, in which state nature for the most part mixeth itself up, and the soul, unless much on its guard, through unrestrained pleasure, quickly suffereth some stain. It cannot, indeed, come to pass that a soul suffering any cross with a resigned heart for the glory of God should not taste a certain divine sweetness. For although it might not perhaps be conscious of any kind of sensible sweetness (God hiding himself for the time), by the very fact that the cross is being borne the soul hath a certain heavenly savour from knowing that the will and desire is to endure this suffering for the everlasting glory of God.

3. If the Will of God be sweet to thee only when he willeth thee to be in good health and to live, but bitter when he willeth thee to be ill and die, thou art not yet fully resigned; thou hast not thy heart thoroughly upright. If thou wishest that thy heart should no longer be crooked, join it in all things to the Will of God, which is always completely

upright. Allow God to do with thee whatsoever he may will and as he may will, in life and in death, in time and in eternity. Suffer God (with thy full acquiescence) to do whatsoever may please him with thy soul and body, with thy friends and thy possessions, and with all that concerns thee.* Let this be thy one and only desire, that his Will may be always perfectly done, and may the same divine Will be always thy best comfort. Say to God: "O Lord, as thou from all eternity hast willed, so be it done, and not as I will. May thy most gracious Will be done in me and with me, with all men and all their affairs now and for ever!" Nothing better canst thou ask, no more noble prayer canst thou pour out before God, than that his most holy Will may be done.

4. Even if thou hast for a long time been indulging thyself by an evil life, and now thou hast to die, nevertheless be resigned. Do not even wish to know or to examine whether God will send thee into purgatory after thy death, or will receive thee into heaven. As the sweetness of his mercy pleaseth thee, the

* "I thank thee, O Lord, for doing thine own Will in thine own way, because it is thy Will." "I will whatever thou willest. I will it because thou willest it. I will it in the way thou willest. I will it as long as thou willest it."

beauty of his justice should not displease thee. The prayer of a truly resigned man is this: "O Lord my God, if it should promote thy praise that after my death I should burn for fifty years in the flames of purgatory, I cast myself under thy feet, and for thy honour I accept these pains with a most ready mind." The holy Fathers assert that the soul that should, for the everlasting glory of God, accept as willingly and lovingly his justice as his mercy, will obtain the pardon of all sin and all the punishment due to sin as quickly as one little drop of water is consumed in a blazing furnace.

5. God willeth to do good to thee as long as thou art a man of good will; he willeth to make thee blessed with him in everlasting happiness. This is his will, because he is infinitely good and merciful. The Creator, rich in all things, needeth not thy goods, but seeketh a heart turned to him, humble, resigned, and confirmed in holy confidence in himself, as he found in that thief to whom, hanging on the cross, he said: "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise." If only thou hast a heart of this kind, in no way canst thou be separated from God. For he will be with thee, whether in life or death, with affection more than fatherly, he will protect thee and comfort thee. He will do, indeed,

what he promised by the mouth of his prophet: *As one whom the mother caresseth, so will I comfort you, and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice.**

6. Wherefore, whether living or dying, trust thyself and all other things to the Providence of God, and cast on him all thy care. Lean on his goodness and mercy entirely, and trust in him to the very full, whatever may happen.† Without any doubt he will take greater care of thee than thou couldst take of thyself. Our Lord loveth thee and thy salvation with exceeding charity, for he hath made thee out of mere mercy, according to his own image and likeness, and willed, from most pure and burning love, to become man, to suffer and to die for thee. He is as full of loving desire for the welfare of all who love him sincerely and worship him reverently as if his whole happiness, nay, his very Being, depended on them. If we were to compare the charity with which God loveth thee with the love of all fathers and mothers, past, present, and to come, for their children, it would be like comparing the waters of the vast ocean to one tiny drop.

7. Nor ought there to be any kind of doubt

* Isa. lxvi 13; xii 1.

† *Cf.* Ps. liv 23; Matt. vi 25; 1 Pet. v 7.

in thy mind of his great love of thee, because perhaps thou hast spent all or the greater part of thy life in a wicked and iniquitous manner. For although the sins by which thou hast offended God may be innumerable and their guilt unspeakable, still, because thou hast sincerely confessed them, because thou hast utterly renounced them and hast turned to God, because thou hast humbled thyself without pretence, and dost now desire and strive to please God with all thy soul, thou hast certainly become dear to God and to the whole court of heaven. God, who hath bestowed on thee true contrition, hath without any doubt given thee also pardon. Nor doth he look at thy former state of sin, but he looketh at the state in which thou art now, or at least desirest to be. Great, in good truth, is the honour due to God, because he so mercifully and generously receiveth the basest sinner returning to ask his forgiveness. The citizens of heaven break forth into the most melodious praise of God when they see the Majesty of the Most High forgiving with such love a repenting sinner. Believe, without any hesitation, that God embraceth thee with boundless love. Believe also that he, who thus loveth thee, both can and will dispose all things well for the salvation of thy soul. Nothing more doth he require of thee

than humble resignation of thyself in all things, denial of thine own will, and full trust in him.

8. If thou canst not as yet resign thy will to him as freely and entirely as thou fain wouldst, if thou canst not help feeling afraid and downhearted on account of some trial, or because death is drawing near, do not be discouraged, for God looketh at thy good will and desire, and is pleased with it. In order that Christ might be thy comfort in this weakness, he himself allowed fear and sorrow to overwhelm his soul when his passion and death approached. Therefore, cast all thy fear into the fathomless depth of his goodness and mercy, and say to him, even if not with the most ready heart, at least with a loving intention: "O Lord, I offer, resign, and commit myself to thee: thy Will be done." Often doth it happen that a man of unresigned will may meet trials more bravely and confidently, and may endure them with more show of fortitude than another whose will is truly resigned to God.

9. Cast away resolutely from thy soul all inordinate sadness, and, as already said, lean with all confidence on the loving-kindness of God, saying with blessed Job: *Even if he should kill me, yet will I trust in him.** To

* Job xiii 15.

this doth Isaias the prophet exhort thee in the words: *Who is there that hath walked in darkness, and hath no light? Let him hope in the name of the Lord and lean upon his God.** It is utterly impossible that God should abandon a man of right faith and of good will who hopeth in him. *Because he hoped in me, I will deliver him.*†

* Isa. l 10. † Ps. xc 14.

CHAPTER X

EXERCISE OF INTROVERSION, OR INWARD CONVERSATION, WITH SEVEN SUBJECTS

SECTION I

FIRST SUBJECT OF INWARD CONVERSATION: THE PRESENCE OF GOD

1. RECALL thy mind often from created things and turn it to thy Lord and God himself.* Walk reverently before him, who by the presence of his Majesty and by the greatness of his power is everywhere, as he himself declares, by the mouth of his prophet: *I fill heaven and earth.*† Everywhere is he present, but by no place is he contained, by no place is he enclosed. Everywhere is he whole and undivided; he cannot be touched by any uncleanness. Filth that affects our senses is only unclean according to the senses, not according to reason. In God's sight nothing is unclean except sin, by which he himself cannot be stained any more than the rays of the sun could be defiled by shining into a drain.

2. To the question, "Where was God before the world was made?" I answer: He was with himself, he was in himself, and now,

* *Cf.* Gen. xvii 1. † Jer. xxiii 24.

after creation, he is in himself. God, then, who is everywhere present, penetrateth all created things, and is nearer to them by his secret and hidden essence than they are to themselves. He himself is the "Being" of all things, in this sense, that upon him all created things depend, that without him all things are nothing and would at once be reduced to nothing unless held in being by him. All things are in God, as in the power by which they are contained and ruled. St Paul, therefore, declared that in God *we live and move and have our being*.* All things also are in God, according to ideal existence; for the ideas or "intelligible forms" of all things were from eternity in the mind or knowledge of God; in his mind they remain constant and unchangeable and are life. God himself—that is, the divine Essence—is the one idea and the one "exemplar" (pattern or model) of all things, representing all things in an intellectual way. Hence St John the Evangelist, after saying that all things were made through the eternal Word of God, added: *That which was made, in him was life*.†

3. As I have said, God is in all things. But in creatures endowed with reason, upon whom his image is impressed, he is present in a most excellent way, however far away he

* Acts xvii 28. † John i 3.

may be from the perception of the wicked. Every wicked man is indeed far away from God, in the sense of being unlike him, and every righteous man is near him by being like him. To good men God is present by giving them his saving grace; to those in heaven through clear manifestation of his glory; to the lost he is present by the fitting execution of his justice. Happy, indeed, is that soul who, loving God sincerely, knoweth how (by his grace) to contemplate, in this exile, his presence with free, clear, calm, and simple intuition* of mind.

SECTION II

SECOND SUBJECT OF INTERNAL CONVERSATION: THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

1. How we are to think of the Mystery.
2. Image of the adorable Trinity in the soul.
3. This mystery to be considered with deep reverence.
4. Created images of the Trinity.
5. The adorable Trinity incomprehensible.

1. WHEN thinking of the mystery of the adorable Trinity, do not, like the heathen, imagine to thyself three Gods; but believe

* Intuition means "direct sight" without images or consideration. This cannot be without the special gift of God; without the gift of contemplation.—TRANSLATOR.

that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God, who is the everlasting fulness of essence, life, power, holiness, wisdom, goodness, sweetness, loveliness, riches, excellence, happiness, glory, and, in a word, is all perfection. Believe, I repeat, that the Three uncreated Persons are one Godhead, one substance or essence, infinitely exceeding all created beings, boundless, depending on nothing, needing no one else, existing of himself, and sufficient in himself, infinitely bright, beautiful, joyful, calm, worthy of all love, infinitely perfect, superessential,* and simple, who cannot be seen by mortal eyes nor comprehended by created intellect. Adore the Unity of Substance in the Trinity of Persons, and the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of Substance. The one and undivided Essence is Three Persons, and the Three Persons are the one and undivided Essence. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are in substance absolutely one, although in the Persons there is a great distinction. One is the Person of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Ghost; but there is not one essence of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Ghost, for there is only one substance of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one

* Superessential means above and more perfect than all created essence or being.—TRANSLATOR.

nature, one Godhead, one Majesty. As we confess that the unbegotten Father is the perfect and unchangeable God—in other words, that the whole and true Godhead is in the Father—so also must we confess that the Son, born from the Father, is perfect and unchangeable God; and the Holy Ghost proceeding from the Father and the Son (for he is the love of the Father and the Son) is perfect and unchangeable God. Still, the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost are not three Gods, but one perfect and unchangeable God, one Lord, one Eternal, one Almighty, one Beginning of all things that have been made. Whatsoever one Person is according to substance, that each of the other Persons is. Moreover, whatsoever is in one Person, that same is wholly in each of the others, nor hath one anything less than the three together, nor the three together anything more than one alone.

The Father is of himself, he is his own eternal Essence, and receiveth nothing from anyone. The Son is not from himself, for he is from the Father only, and from the Father he hath whatsoever he hath. The Holy Ghost also is not from himself, but from the Father and the Son, and hath, from the Father and the Son, whatsoever he hath. The Father communicateth himself wholly

to the Son; for he giveth him his whole divine being or the fulness of his divine nature, and, together with the Son, he giveth the same fulness of his divine nature to the Holy Ghost.

Moreover, nothing is in the glorious Trinity before or after, greater or less; but these three divine Persons, having one and the same Substance, are equally eternal and absolutely equal and alike, every one dwelling in each of the others.

In the Father is the whole Son and Holy Ghost; in the Son is the whole Father and Holy Ghost; in the Holy Ghost is the whole Father and Son.*

And although we attribute to the Father power, to the Son wisdom, and to the Holy Ghost goodness, nevertheless one and the same is the power, wisdom, and goodness of the three Persons. The Person of the Son took to himself the nature of man, but not the Person of the Father nor the Person of the Holy Ghost; but yet the incarnation of the Son was the work of all the Trinity. For as there is in the three Persons only one essence, so also there is one only operation, one and the same will.

2. In the soul of man the image of the Holy Trinity shineth forth in a wondrous

* *Cf.* John xiv 9, 10.

manner. For the rational soul hath (like the angels) three natural powers of great excellence, memory, intellect, and will, given it by God, in order that by the memory the soul may be able to call God to mind, by the intellect to know him, and by the will to choose him, to love him, and to enjoy him. But as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one God, or one divine Substance, so also these three higher and spiritual powers of the soul are one mind, or one essence of the soul. The three eternal and inseparable Persons of the divine nature work inseparably, and the three powers of the soul also cannot be divided and work together inseparably. For the memory cannot recall and reflect on anything without the intellect and the will; nor can the intellect know anything without the memory and the will; nor can the will choose or love anything without the memory and the intellect. These three powers of the soul are spiritual senses; for sight is attributed to intellectual power, hearing to the power of memory, smell, taste, and touch to the affective and loving power, that is, the will. But as the spirit is nobler than the body, so also these senses are more perfect and excellent than the bodily senses. Moreover, that soul which, raised above its natural powers, meriteth to find God in its simple

essence and its most hidden sanctuary, and there to be united to him immediately, exerciseth the inward faculties of sight, hearing, smell, and touch in a way no words can describe.*

3. Take care not to speak of the mystery of the most high Trinity except in a very sober way; for as impossible is it for anyone to explain it as for a man to stand upon the earth and to touch the heaven with his finger. For who can explain or understand how the Father, seeing most clearly his own everlasting Essence and perfectly knowing himself, bringeth forth his Word or generateth his Son, consubstantial, co-eternal, and co-equal? For that knowledge of himself is the generation of his Son in eternity. Who likewise can understand how the Holy Ghost doth

* Thus St Augustine writes: "What is it that I love, when I love thee? . . . I love a kind of light, a kind of voice, a kind of odour, a kind of food, and a kind of embracing, when I love my God, who is the light, the voice, the odour, the food, the embracing of my inward man; where that light shineth into my soul which is not circumscribed by any place, when that voice soundeth which is not snatched away by time, when that odour pours forth which is not scattered by the air, when that food savours the taste which is unconsumed by eating, when that embracement is enjoyed which is not divorced by satiety. This it is which I love, when I love my God."—*Confessions* x 6.

proceed and come forth from the Father and the Son, with whom also he is consubstantial, co-eternal, and co-equal? These things surpass the power of man's intellect to understand.

4. Nevertheless, to strengthen by some kind of visible likeness thy faith, by which it is necessary to believe that the Son is eternal and the Holy Ghost is eternal, as is the Father from whom they proceed and receive their being, reflect how light and heat proceed from fire and at the same time are simultaneous with the fire. For the very same moment in which there is fire, light and heat come forth, and never can there be fire without light and heat, so that if the fire had been eternal the light also and heat would have been eternal. In like manner the light and heat of the sun must be of the same age as the sun.

5. This incomprehensible generation and procession in the most sacred Trinity, as it never had a beginning, so also can it never have any end. For if it ever began, or could at any time come to an end, some change would take place in the divine nature, which can in no way be. For the nature and substance of God are unchangeable. Since every divine Person is infinite in perfection, and everyone seeth the two others with the

clearest possible vision and most fully comprehendeth them, these three Persons love each other with a love most joyous, most ardent and absolutely infinite. Better, indeed, is it to have some secret knowledge in the soul about so high a mystery than to speak much about it in words. In these matters, which cannot be comprehended by created reason or intelligence, holding fast to faith and believing with a simple mind all that the Catholic Church teacheth, give all thine attention to humility and love.

SECTION III

THE THIRD SUBJECT: THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

1. How they should be treated in prayer.
2. Calmly, and not with too great study.

1. CONSIDER with all the devotion of thy soul the various attributes of the Lord thy God: his goodness, sweetness, beauty, loving-kindness, mercy, charity, faithfulness, and all his other perfections, which indeed are simply boundless and far beyond our understanding. When desirous to breathe forth to Jesus aspirations of love, thou canst say to him either in mind or with actual words, some such prayer as this:

"O good Jesus, would that I were pure and innocent in thy sight. Would that I could please thee by true humility and perfect resignation. O my Beloved, O my most dear Redeemer, O sweetness of my heart, life of my soul, O pure joy and my chaste delight—O Lord, my God, what do I desire but thee? Thou art sufficient for me. Thou art my one and most joyful good. I desire to embrace thee with the arms of my soul; with sweet affection kindle within my soul thy fire, and let the flames of thy love burn in it. Grant that I may love thee with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my strength, in order to do thy gracious Will."

2. But do not indulge in these aspirations too much, nor too strongly, but always use discretion, lest thy head may suffer hurt, and thy natural powers may be overdone, or even destroyed. If sometimes thou hast to endure pain in spiritual exercises, offer it to the eternal praise of God and suffer it patiently. A man who is indiscreet and doth not consider how much his strength will permit him to do, but by violent and imprudent effort trieth incessantly to converse in his soul and to raise his mind to God, does not allow God to find rest in him.*

However, evil thoughts should be cast out

* In a conversation we must listen as well as speak.

by good ones, and the eyes of the heart should always be directed to the Lord everywhere present, lovingly, calmly, and with simplicity.* In good truth, just as he who hath a parching thirst doth not easily forget it, so he who earnestly loveth God cannot help often calling him to mind, unless his mind be filled with other thoughts. For where there is love and interest there is the eye and the thought. Everyone must prudently consider the measure of grace which he hath received from God, because the Holy Spirit distributeth his grace in different ways to different men.

SECTION IV

THE FOURTH SUBJECT: PRAYER WITHOUT CEASING

By those words of the Gospel, *You ought always to pray, and not to faint,*† and by those of St Paul, *Pray without ceasing,*‡ we are not commanded literally to continue the exercise of prayer without any interval—for human weakness could not endure this—but we are admonished never so completely to give up prayer as not to devote ourselves to it at certain hours every day. And, indeed, a man of good will, who always acts well and refers all he does to the honour of God, does in a true sense always pray.

* *Cf.* Ps. xxiv 15. † Luke xviii. ‡ 1 Thess. v 17.

SECTION V

THE FIFTH SUBJECT: HOLY READING

HOLY reading, at fitting times, and other exercises done for the praise of God, often benefit the soul as much as, and sometimes far more than, prayer itself. For not prayer only, but also any holy words read or heard for the glory of God, and any other pious actions and thoughts, wonderfully adorn the soul. The mind of a righteous man receiveth much excellent advantage from spiritual doctrine, for by it the soul is preserved from stain, ignorance is cast out, the mind is rendered calm, enlightened, nourished, aroused, strengthened, and receiveth a marvellous beauty. Therefore, willingly read and hear the Word of God and wholesome instruction, by whomsoever it may be offered to thee, and however simply it may be spoken or written; but the corrupt and pestilential doctrine of heretics abominate with all thy soul. Even if a man may not be able exactly to understand or remember the holy things he read or heard for the praise of God, yet such things will do much good to his soul. Certainly while thus occupied he doth not lose his time, but when even many and

good things are read, if a man hath not a pure and upright intention, time is certainly lost.

SECTION VI

THE SIXTH SUBJECT: CHANGE OF EXERCISES

1. Spiritual tears.
2. The practice of exercises without anxiety, etc.

1. It is not well to occupy the soul too long with one and the same exercise, lest it may become fatigued and wearied, but spiritual exercises should be prudently varied. If actual tears are wanting in prayers, meditations, and other holy exercises, be not troubled, for to a man desiring to please God spiritual tears flowing from the eyes of the soul will not be wanting, and though tears may not flow from his bodily eyes, his heart will certainly weep. For the tears that do not flow, offer to the Father the tears of Christ. In fact, strong emotions of sensible compunction should, for the most part, be carefully avoided, lest they should injure the health and destroy the calmness of the soul.

2. Attend to God and to divine and spiritual things with a joyful, free, and simple heart, without undue anxiety or too great strain and effort of mind. Seek also in holy

exercises the honour of God more than thine own advantage or thine own delight. Cast entirely away all vicious self-love, and be ever ready to interrupt and lay aside thine own private devotions where thou seest that God willeth it and when good reason demandeth it. It often happens that, when people have undertaken to say certain prayers every day, if business or necessity arise to prevent their devotions, or even if holy obedience should interfere with their customary prayers, they allow themselves to be upset and lose their peace of mind. This self-love should be avoided. The Fathers also tell us that a man in praying ought not to use extraordinary gestures that might bring too much attention on himself when not alone, for instance, striking his breast often in a violent manner, heaving loud sighs, lifting up his hands on high, and other similar things. Some can pray more fervently sitting than kneeling, others can pray better standing or walking; everyone, then, should pray in the position he findeth most helpful, provided discretion be observed and no scandal be given. Prayer, whether vocal or mental, when devoutly done, pleaseth God much.

SECTION VII

THE SEVENTH SUBJECT:
THE MANHOOD OF CHRIST

1. To be contemplated with love and desire of imitation.
2. Think especially of his sacred Passion.
3. Ask of God a good will like that of Christ.
4. The Manhood of Christ the door of contemplation.
5. Method of contemplating the Incarnation.
6. Christ in his sufferings still rejoiced in divine union.
7. The Body of Christ perfectly formed and living from the first instant.

1. REMEMBER always, I beseech thee, those things which the loving Jesus, God and Lord, Father and Brother, did for thee, and thank him with a devout heart. For thy sake did he become Man. He remembered thee always and everywhere, he always held thee before the eyes of his mind, doing and bearing all things willingly for thy salvation. Contemplate and, as far as thou art able, imitate his humility, patience, resignation, charity, kindness, modesty, continence, sobriety, and all the other holy virtues which his life on earth displayed. The life of Christ is a most excellent book open to the learned and unlearned, to the perfect and imperfect, in fact, to all who desire to please God. He who is

careful often to study this book will become full of wisdom and will easily obtain the pardon of sin. He will learn also how to mortify his evil affections, and he will obtain enlightenment of mind, peace, and quiet of conscience, with firm trust in God founded on sincere love. Even if all the books ever written were to be lost, the life and passion of Christ would abundantly teach Christians all the lessons of virtue and truth. In meditation, look upon everything done and suffered by Jesus Christ to belong to thee, just as if he had done and suffered it for thy sake only. In fact, these things profit thy soul none the less than if thou wert really the only man redeemed by Christ. If thou hadst been actually the only one needing redemption, he would most willingly, for thy sake only, have become Man, suffered, and died. Judge from this how much he thirsteth for thy salvation, and how ardently he loveth thee.

2. Lay up the thought of his venerable passion as a pearl beyond price in the casket of thy heart, and think of it constantly with a grateful mind. Behold thy Lord, with surpassing love, willed to suffer bitter and disgraceful torments that he might satisfy for thy sins and redeem thee. Paint on thy mind most touching pictures of his passion, and plant in the midst of thy heart the beauti-

ful tree of the Lord's cross. Choose our Lord Jesus Christ himself in agony of pain, covered with wounds, as the dearly beloved spouse of thy soul, and lovingly contemplate and embrace him. From his rose-coloured wounds flow rivers of grace, sweet as honey. He who knoweth how to apply the mouth of his soul to our Lord's open side, and there to remain in spirit, trying to fathom the depths of his Heart, he indeed will taste the wine of eternal life and will learn by experience how sweet a paradise Jesus is to those who love him.* It is impossible to write with the pen or even to conceive in the mind what fruit a humble man of good will can reap from loving meditation on the passion of our Lord. In fact, with however little sensible feeling he should read anything about the life and passion of Christ and consider it in his mind, he cannot help gaining much spiritual benefit, just as one thrusting his hand into flour cannot avoid having his fingers whitened. But he who thinks on the passion of our Lord, even with many tears, and yet should neglect to imitate his humility, patience, resignation, and charity, will reap little or no fruit from his meditation.

3. Distress not thy mind if it be not the will of God to raise thee in this life to any high

* *Cf.* 1 Pet. ii 3.

degree of contemplation, but beseech him constantly to bestow on thee a good, humble, and resigned will, and to preserve it in thee unto the end. Ask that thou mayest always be able to live in his grace and good favour. And because thou lackest wings with which to fly on high, remain as a young bird under the wings of thy mother, that is, under the wings of the divine Wisdom made Man for thee. Hide thyself and find thy rest in the most sacred Manhood of Christ. This, in the stormy sea of this present life, will be to thee a safe ship in which to sail to the harbour of salvation, even if in this life thou dost not rise to the contemplation of the Godhead. *The corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind, musing on many things.** But thou wilt have a deep knowledge of the Godhead itself in case the most High should enlighten thy mind with frequent rays of heavenly grace, and should transfigure it with divine glory.

4. Remember the caution I have already given, not to consider Christ with the eyes of the soul as man only, but as true God and true Man. Consider him as the most excellent spiritual gem in his divine nature, and as the most lovely flower in his human nature. For although thou mayest not be able perfectly

* Wisd. ix 15.

to see the brilliant rays of his Godhead, thou canst certainly believe that the brightness of his divine nature dwelleth in the Manhood and Body of Christ as in a most venerable temple. If thou dost believe this, if thou dost thus contemplate the Manhood of Christ, thou art not far from his Godhead, and wilt hold fast to it in a fitting and useful way.

5. When the only-begotten Son of God for the salvation of the world was conceived in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Ghost, he remained what he was, but took to himself something that he was not before. He took to himself a body and a rational soul; he took to himself man, though he remained God. The nature of God and the nature of man, utterly different in themselves, were united in one. The Godhead was not changed into man's nature, for the nature of God is unchangeable; but human nature was taken up into God. Each of the natures remained whole and entire with its own qualities. But the Eternal Word, the rational soul, and the flesh of man were united into one person, so that those three became one Person, one Christ. In consequence of this wonderful union, the most holy soul of Christ from the first moment of its creation always contemplated with perfect clearness the glorious Trinity.

6. Even when Christ hung in suffering upon the cross, the higher powers of his soul possessed the beatific vision even as now in heaven, but at the same time according to the flesh, in the sensitive and lower powers of the soul, he suffered torments the most terrible. In order that his passion might be the more bitter, he did not allow any comfort to flow over from the higher to the lower part of his soul. On this account, when on the cross, he was so afflicted and so utterly without any sort of comfort, that his Manhood cried out in anguish, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?** He being the Son of the living God, the Word and Wisdom of the Father, true and uncreated light, and everywhere present as God. As God he is equal to the Father and the Holy Ghost, though as Man he is less than they; yea, as Man he is less than his own divine nature, for nothing created can equal the Creator. Now the Manhood of the Lord Jesus is the very door by which we enter into his divine nature.†

7. If anyone desireth to know more clearly when it was that God the Trinity created the Body and Soul of Christ, let him understand that as soon as the blessed Mary in humble resignation had given her consent to the

* Ps. xxi; Matt. xxvii 46. † *Cf.* John x 9.

incarnation, saying to the angel, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word,** the Holy Ghost immediately overshadowed her, and in a moment, with the Father and the Son, formed from the most pure blood of the sacred Virgin a human body, perfect in every member; at the same instant he created a rational soul, which he immediately joined to that body. The bodies of other infants are not formed in this way, suddenly and in an instant, but gradually according to the natural process, and when the body is perfectly formed, God createth the soul and breathes it into the body.

As I have already said, the Manhood of Christ is the way and the door by which we attain to the divine nature, nor can anyone safely aspire to the quiet of contemplation and divine union, except by diligently imitating the virtues of Christ most holy and by striving to impress on his soul the image of his Manhood by devout and loving meditation.

* Luke i 38.

CHAPTER XI

THE SOUL SHOULD EVER TEND TOWARDS HIDDEN UNION WITH GOD

SECTION I

HIDDEN UNION WITH GOD

1. How it cometh to pass in the devout soul.
2. How in this union the soul contemplateth God.
3. Few attain this union: they should walk with caution.

1. A GREAT thing is it, yea, truly great, for a soul in this state of exile to be joined to God by hidden and immediate union in divine light. This is accomplished when the soul, cleansed, humble, and resigned, burning with the fire of charity, is carried above itself by God's grace. When, thus raised up into the unspeakable brightness of divine light, it ceaseth to occupy itself with various thoughts, it disregardeth all imaginations, however refined and exalted; it is completely liquefied by love and, as if reduced to nothing, floweth into God. For then, without anything between it and him, it is intimately united to God; it becometh one spirit with him; it is transformed and, as it were, changed into him, as iron in the fire is changed into fire, without ceasing to be iron. The soul

becometh one with God; but not in the sense of becoming of the same substance and nature as God. In this union the soul findeth rest, not acting of itself, but being acted on by God in the sweetness of love, and in this state hath an ineffable abundance of peace and joy.

In this union the soul tasteth the sweetness of the Lord in such a manner that heaven and earth and all that are in them, compared with this spiritual comfort, appear to melt away into nothing.* In this state, the soul, raised far above the movement of its own natural powers, cometh to the knowledge of its own silent and tranquil essence, where there is unity and simplicity. It findeth the inner sanctuary in which God dwelleth. The soul thus findeth eternal truth, and possesseth inexhaustible riches.

Happy, indeed, is that soul which is thus carried above all created things, and even above itself: in its memory no images remain, and it is perfectly pure; in the intellect the bright rays of the heavenly sun shine with brilliancy, manifesting divine truth; in the will, a fire of peaceful love, the touch of the Holy Spirit is felt, the living fountain flowing with rivers of eternal sweetness. Thus is the soul led into the excellent state of union with God.

* *Cf.* Ps. xxxiii 9; 1 Pet. ii 3.

2. When the soul hath thus entered into the vast solitude of the Godhead, it happily loseth itself. Enlightened by the splendour of this bright cloud, in its excess of knowledge it becometh without knowledge, and is established in what may be called a kind of wise ignorance. In this state, although it knoweth not what God is, to whom it is united in love, although it seeth not God as he is in his glory, nevertheless it learneth by experimental knowledge that he infinitely surpasseth all things that can be known by the senses, and whatever can be written, spoken, or conceived by the mind of man. Now doth it understand how far better it is to go forth into God without any image in the mind, than to contemplate him in the noblest and most divine images and likenesses. Lastly, by the intimate embrace and contact of love, it knows God better than the eyes of the body know the visible sun. Such a soul will well understand what is meant by true contemplation, for its sight, directed straight into the region of indescribable light and there fixed, seeth with intense joy how narrow, weak, and almost nothing is every created thing, compared to the most high and everlasting God.

3. Not all the servants of God are thus carried above themselves during this life.

Not all come to the knowledge of the hidden, simple, pure, and Godlike sanctuary of the soul; not all are admitted to that mystical and excellent union with God, to which no one can possibly attain by his own endeavour or labour, but only by an especial grace of God. But those who are thus favoured, when this wonderful action of God ceases in their soul, should at once go back to their ordinary acts and holy thoughts, their good works and spiritual exercises; they must remain humble and persevere in their desire of perfection, and behave as if they had only just begun to live a good life. For as long as this life lasteth no one can rise so high or enter so deeply into God as not to be able to rise higher and to be more absorbed into him. Something will always remain that has not yet been mortified.

Even if these souls are no longer moved by the sight of created things, still is it necessary for them to watch and to have a diligent care over themselves even till death. King David was certainly a man according to God's heart, who in youth, while keeping his father's flock, received the grace of extraordinary contemplation, yet this very man, after wonderful lights of prophecy had been bestowed upon him, for God had *manifested to him the uncertain and hidden things of his*

wisdom,* after frequently tasting the divine sweetness, after mystical transformations, after ecstasies in the fire of divine love, fell in his old age into most grievous crimes—namely, adultery and murder.

SECTION II

DANGER OF FALSE UNION

1. Quiet of soul but neglect of virtue.
2. Wait for the call of God.

1. SOME foolish men fancy that perfection consisteth in keeping their minds empty and freeing their imaginations from all images, in order to seek themselves in an idle and unoccupied kind of sensuality, meanwhile neglecting the love of God, good works, and spiritual exercises. Such men are followers of a false mysticism, since they seek themselves with most impure self-love, and their delight is in themselves, not in God. They are miserable slaves of the devil. Those who really have the gift of contemplation and the supernatural prayer of quiet seek indeed after purity of mind and holy peace, but at the same time do not neglect good works and spiritual exercises.

They try their best to practise virtue; they praise God and remember the passion of our

* Ps. 17.

Lord; they give thanks and pray when they have opportunity. They cleave to God with sincere love. They carefully look at God, seeking his honour rather than their own pleasure. God does in them a noble work, because they, full of divine love, show themselves by silence of the soul to be pure and simple, thinking of nothing and making no considerations of their own. In this way, freed by God's grace from all images in their mind, they are carried out of themselves to the bright ray of the divine cloud and are united without any medium (or immediately) with God. Many righteous men, although they do not arrive at this union during their exile on earth, still feel in themselves a certain amount of simplicity of thought in prayer. They chase away all disturbing thoughts, and attend in quiet to the joyful presence of God, humbly, calmly, and lovingly. Other things they consider very little or not at all.

2. Furthermore, we must remember that, just as it would be absurd for a man commanded to stand and wait at the table of a king impudently to sit down among the guests without invitation, so in this spiritual feast of prayer would a man act in a rude and unmannerly way if he were to desire to give himself entirely to the quiet of contemplation, without a clear invitation from God.

Do thou, therefore, desire and strive to please God more and more, and at the same time always be content with that grace which our Lord deigneth to give thee. If he should ever will to work within thy soul in any uncommon way, do not resist but follow his Will in a becoming way, keeping thyself always in holy humility, thinking nothing of thyself.

SECTION III

REVELATIONS

1. They should not be desired.
2. How true visions may be distinguished from false. Three marks of true visions: (1) Peace; (2) Truth; (3) Resignation with humility.
3. Humble souls are not easily deceived.

1. VISIONS and revelations (sometimes given even to the wicked) should not be inordinately desired. Those who vainly desire them and rashly believe and trust in them, easily become the dupes of Satan, who transfigureth himself into an angel of light. He often mixeth up true things with false, in order to deceive the unwary.* Sometimes he revealeth true things, sometimes false; but the Holy Spirit

* "And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths;
Win us with honest trifles, to betray us."
SHAKESPEARE: *Macbeth*, Act I, Scene 3.

never revealeth, foretelleth, or declareth anything except the truth.

2. When a good spirit visiteth a soul, at first it causeth fear, but soon after joy and comfort, gladness and peace, together with hunger after righteousness and virtue. But when the devil showeth himself to the soul, the fear remaineth or even increaseth, and although, when he transfigureth himself into the appearance of an angel of light, the soul at first may be lifted up by joy, afterwards it is confused, is filled with darkness, and loseth its peace.

Be cautious, for if a vision be presented to thy mind and thou feelest doubtful whether it be divine or not, God will not be displeased, even if it should be really holy and from him. It is necessary to be prudent and carefully to consider whether visions and revelations are entirely free from all false show, deceit, and absurdity; also whether they agree with the Catholic faith and the teaching of Holy Writ and of the orthodox fathers. If they differ from these, they must be immediately rejected. A diabolical deception is accustomed to make a man proud, unresigned, and obstinate in his own opinion, but a true revelation from God makes him humble, resigned, and docile. There are some men of God who, while awake and in good health, are led, by the

action of God, far away from the senses of the body, that the senses being stilled and without action, the soul may attend more perfectly to divine visions and revelations.

3. Such men, indeed, the wicked spirit is in no way able to seduce, for they, in the revelations they receive, are flooded with extraordinary sweetness of divine charity and with an inpouring of pure intellectual and supernatural light. Our Lord graciously keepeth his protecting hand over all who have genuine humility and seek his help by prayer. He saveth them from the snares laid by the devil for their ruin. Those who are in their own hearts proud, wanting in simple sincerity and double-faced, miserably deceive themselves and cast themselves into the net of the devil. Since God is a most faithful Father, he never giveth to his humble children a stone for bread, or a scorpion for an egg, or a serpent instead of a fish,* but he bestoweth on them the good spirit and all that helps on their salvation. He cannot possibly abandon anyone humbly flying to him for refuge and sincerely trusting in him. The humble, therefore, always escape the snares of Satan. In fact, there is no more certain sign and proof of genuine holiness than humility and perfect resignation.

* *Cf.* Luke xi 11, 12.

CHAPTER XII

WORSHIP OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST—HONOUR OUR LADY AND THE SAINTS

SECTION I

THE HOLY EUCHARIST

1. How to prepare.
2. Faith in the Real Presence.
3. Fruit of Holy Communion.
4. Daily spiritual Communion and Holy Mass.

1. WHEN about to draw near to the heavenly banquet, in which Christ is received, call to mind devoutly the benefits of God, especially the passion of our Lord, in which his unspeakable charity is principally seen. He himself, speaking of this table, said: *Do this in commemoration of me.** As far, then, as thou hast leisure, meditate, that is, think over what our Lord Jesus hath done and borne for thee. At the same time beg him to prepare within thee an agreeable dwelling for himself. Ask him to blot out all thy sins and to adorn thy poor soul with his own merits and virtues.

2. Receive with humble reverence the holy Eucharist, believing with a firm faith that under the appearance of a little bread

* 1 Cor. xi 24; Luke xxii 19.

thou dost receive the true and immortal Body of Christ. For by the divine power, through the words of consecration pronounced by the priest, the substance of the bread and wine is supernaturally converted and changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. Even if the holy Eucharist were given to many thousands of men, every one would receive the Body of our Lord, Christ himself entirely. Moreover, if one consecrated Host were divided into many parts, Christ would remain whole and entire under every fragment.* And, meanwhile, in heaven at the right hand of the Father would the same Body of the Lord remain entire: Christ himself would remain. This grand and incomprehensible mystery of transubstantiation is accomplished by the power of God, to whom nothing is impossible. In very truth Christ giveth his whole self to thee in the Eucharist—that is, he giveth thee his most high Godhead, his perfect Body, with his Blood and his holy Soul.

3. If thou dost receive this venerable and adorable Sacrament rightly and worthily, it will strengthen and stablish thee mightily in good, and it will be a wonderful remedy for sin: it will unite thee closely with God, it will join thy soul with him, making thee one with

* *Fracto demum sacramento.*

him in an intimate way. Moreover, it will make thee in an excellent manner a partaker of all the merits of Christ and of all the virtues which he exercised in his life and passion. It will enrich thy soul with an unspeakable grace. In fact, no tongue can express, no heart can comprehend, how boundless are the spiritual goods which come to the soul from the devout reception of this Sacrament. Praise thy Lord, who in the overflowing abundance of his goodness hath left on earth and bestowed on his Church in this exile so magnificent a treasure.

4. When thou art not able to receive Christ sacramentally, by no means neglect to receive him spiritually, preparing thyself for him and desiring that he should come into thy soul. No one at all can prevent thee from receiving the Eucharist daily in a spiritual manner, provided thou hast the will to do so.

As often as thou art present during the most divine Sacrifice of the Mass, offer in it the Host consecrated by the priest with devout mind to God the Father, in full expiation and satisfaction for thy sins. Offer it to him as an odour of sweetness for his eternal praise, for thine own salvation and that of all others.

SECTION II

THE HOLY VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD

WITH pure affection love the most sweet Mother of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and diligently venerate and call upon her; for she is the kind comforter and advocate, not only of the perfect, but of the imperfect. Never doth she cast anyone from her, but showeth herself willing to listen to all. Sinners who lovingly and humbl, fly to her protection she gently receiveth, showeth them a mother's love, protecteth them, and with maternal affection reconcileth them with her Son. Heaven and earth would perish before anyone earnestly imploring her help would be left unaided. Give thanks to our Lord, who has given her to thee as a mother and helper.

SECTION III

INVOCATION OF THE SAINTS

VENERATE also the other saints, citizens of heaven, as illustrious princes and glorious kings and queens. By no means listen to the unhappy heretics of this age, who most foolishly and rashly assert that the saints in heaven do not know our prayers and cannot

help us, and so ought not to be called upon. For the Catholic and Apostolic Church, which is *the pillar and ground of the truth*,* thinketh far differently. Most certainly the happy state of the saints in the heavenly kingdom doth not allow the ignorance and want of power under which the heretics imagine them to labour. There, in God's kingdom, they enjoy the highest perfection. The saints in heaven contemplate God with clear vision; they see him as he is, for otherwise, if they did not thus see and know him, they would not be in perfect happiness. For Christ in the Gospel said to his Father, *This is eternal Life, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*† Therefore, the saints, by seeing God, are united to him in a way the most excellent, and because they are one with him who knoweth and can do all things which relate to their glory, they know and do whatsoever they will.

Therefore, not only do they know and understand our vocal prayers, but also our holy desires and thoughts by which we speak to them and honour them. With much faithfulness do they help all who devoutly call upon them. As they are the intimate friends and beloved children of God, and already

* 1 Tim. iii 15. † John xvii 3.

reign with him in glory, it marvellously pleaseth him that all Christians should hold them in great honour.

SECTION IV

IMAGES OF THE SAINTS

VENERATE the saints, therefore, as has been said, and hold even their images in honour. Most foolish are the heretics of our time to cast away the images of the saints, because God saith in the Holy Scripture: *Thou shalt not have strange gods before me*, etc. *You shall not make to yourselves any idol or graven thing.** The heretics either cannot or will not distinguish between the idols of false gods and the images of the saints. Of course, Christians, children of the Catholic Church, do not adore graven images as the heathen do, as gods, a thing which God indeed forbids; but they piously venerate the saints themselves represented by their images. For this the Church, the spouse of Christ, taught and governed by the Holy Spirit, hath always piously observed, a practice which she hath received from apostolical tradition.

* Deut. v 7; Lev. xxvi 1.

CHAPTER XIII

HELP IN TIME OF DESOLATION

1. Time should always be spent in praise of God.
2. In time of spiritual dryness more than ever.
3. Sweetness the food of spiritual infants.
4. Indifference of soul in time of trial.
5. Disposition of soul in spiritual dryness.

1. At all times devote thyself to the praise and glory of God. Whilst thou art well, be ever engaged in some good work; when ill, preserve thy soul in meekness and patience. Do not imagine that exercises of piety are not pleasing to God and useful for thine own soul, when they afford little savour to the palate of thy heart; when thou feelest no pleasure in them; when on the contrary thou feelest stiff with frost in the soul, and enveloped in thick darkness.*

2. True devotion consisteth not in sweetness and relish, but in genuine submission, resignation, self-denial, and self-contempt. In the case of many it is better for their salvation to endure dryness and bitterness of heart rather than to enjoy affectionate desires and sweetness. That man mightily pleaseth God who, with fulness of faith and divine love, though in the midst of dryness and

* *Cf.* Ps. cxviii 83.

poverty of soul, knows how to say with a humble spirit:

"O Lord, although my soul is unclean, and unworthy of those comforts often enjoyed by righteous men, I will not abandon thee, but gladly will I remain without comfort, according to thy good pleasure and permission."

He is an unfaithful servant who is willing to serve God only in time of comfort and light, but when he is deprived of spiritual relish immediately withdraweth from God, and seeketh unspiritual and earthly comforts. If, when thou longest for comfort from God, he should refuse it to thee, and thou bearest it with a resigned spirit for his glory, without any doubt thou really hast the comfort thou didst desire in a more true manner and wilt heap up a hundredfold more treasure than if thou didst feel God's comfort sensibly.

Sweetness that is felt is by no means an undoubted sign of holiness, but God showeth his goodness in giving it. He sometimes bestoweth it on men leading very bad lives.

Unless a man should feel, as a consequence of sensible sweetness in prayer, a certain energy of soul in good works and hunger for righteousness, and, above all, unless an affection for holy humility, obedience, and charity should abide in him, his sweetness may be much suspected.

3. Our Lord often moveth men in the early days of their conversion to his service with such abundant grace in the lower powers of the soul, that they, as though inebriated with the wine of spiritual sweetness, are obliged to show by unusual words and gestures the wealth of the delights of their spirits, and even sometimes to fall into a kind of insensibility, sleep or ecstasy of mind. In this way the new and inexperienced servants and friends of God are joined in sensible union with him by a divine embrace, and receive from him spiritual kisses of surpassing sweetness.

This sensible union which taketh place in the lower part of the soul and through the medium of the senses is good, provided that those who experience it strive more and more to advance in true humility, patience, and resignation; but the mystical and much truer union, which some perfect men, raised far above their natural powers, and swallowed up in the depths of the love of God—a union in the highest and most noble part of their being (that is, in the mind or spirit and the secret basis of the soul) without any medium —is incomparably more excellent.

4. Be prepared, in thine own case, to suffer dryness of soul, anxieties of heart and darkness of mind, all thy life long, if it should be

good in God's sight. On the other hand, if the same merciful Lord should deign sometimes to bestow upon thine unworthy soul spiritual comfort and sweetness, do not reject it, but receive it with a humble and grateful mind, remaining always in the holy fear of God. Take great care not to give way to any vainglory or self-conceit on account of this spiritual comfort. Be cautious not to lean upon it or to trust too much in it. Do not abuse it by taking too much delight in the pleasure it affords. For not in the gifts of God, but in God himself, ought we to rest.

5. Nature loves in all things to seek itself and for the most part in a very secret way, under the pretence of common sense and of the highest good; but this disorderly self-seeking should be skilfully watched and diligently mortified. For impure self-seeking joined with divine comfort is like a mixture of disgusting filth with the most fragrant balm. The gifts of God should be poured back wholly into God, so that a man should strive to keep himself as unattached to them as if he had never received them. The more mercifully, therefore, God may deign to visit and comfort thee, take care to be more humble and more determined in self-contempt. When comfort is withdrawn be not discouraged, but persevere in good works and exercises of

devotion in time of spiritual want and sadness, as well as in days of abundance and joy. In place of thine own unfruitful and dry heart, offer to the heavenly Father the earnest desires and burning love of the Heart of Jesus Christ; offer the holy devotion and love of the blessed Mary the Virgin and all the chosen ones of God.

CHAPTER XIV

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE LAST THINGS

SECTION I

ON DEATH

1. Death of a resigned man always happy.
2. Therefore to be desired, not feared.
3. By all the faithful death should not be too much feared.

1. REMAIN united to God with complete peace in all the events of life. For thus thou wilt lead a life pleasing to God, and at last thou wilt depart hence by the gate of a holy death. Thou wilt die in the grace and friendship of God, and thy death will be the entrance into true life, according to the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ: *He that believeth in me, even if he be dead shall live, and everyone that liveth and believeth in me, shall not die for ever.**

To the soul going forth from the prison of the body, the same Christ will whisper in the gentlest possible way: " I am thy salvation; I thy Maker, thy Redeemer, who hath loved thee, through the darkness of death have sought thee and possessed thee. Thou wilt be mine for ever. Fear not." Thus will

* John xi 25.

the Lord thy God comfort thee, if thou art a man of good and resigned will.

2. Do not, then, allow the thought of death to give thee too much fear, but rather let it fill thee with joy. It had this effect on a certain holy virgin who used to say to God: "O Lord, when at length will my body, thou thyself taking away my life, return into dust, and my soul flow back into thee its source?" She, indeed, longed for death, life she only bore with patience. Nor shouldst thou anxiously and uneasily speculate as to what manner of death awaiteth thee, but with peace of mind leave thyself and all that concerns thy death to the providence and Will of God.

3. If perchance thou canst not rise to the point of desiring death, at least let it be bearable. Say to our Lord, *Thy will be done.* Jesus, thy King, by dying hath smoothed the road and made it agreeable: do thou humbly follow the way that he hath gone. Even if thou art in fear and dread, remain steadfast in holy hope and confidence in the good Lord, who desireth to act towards thee not as a severe judge but as a merciful Father. He himself willed before his death to fear and to be sorrowful,* that he might comfort thee in thy fear and sorrow. Offer thy sorrow, united to his sorrow, to his eternal praise,

* *Cf.* Mark xiv 34.

and thy death in union with his. Death will bring thee numberless good things, if only thou fearest and lovest God. Certainly when thou hast departed from this life no longer canst thou be stained by sin, never again wilt thou offend God, never more will thy corruptible body be a hindrance to thy union with God.

SECTION II

CONSIDERATION OF PARADISE

1. Happiness of the soul.
2. Glory even of the body.

1. AFTER passing through purgatory (if purification be still necessary for thee) thou wilt come to thy fatherland, to the heavenly country, the country of everlasting glory, the pleasant country of eternal spring, where there is no sickness, no corruption, no fear, no anxiety, no sorrow, no want, no affliction, no trouble, no misery. There in complete happiness wilt thou enjoy the highest and unchangeable good, *which eye seeth not, ear heareth not, nor cometh it into the heart of mortal man to conceive.**

For thou wilt see with direct vision the glorious Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the one God, worthy of the highest

* 1 Cor. ii 9.

possible love. Thou wilt be in God and God in thee in the most excellent way. Thus united to God thou wilt perfectly taste his sweetness, and wilt be completely inebriated with the torrent of his pleasure.* Then wilt thou fully know and realize how he hath loved thee from eternity with unbounded love.

Full of unspeakable, yea, incomprehensible joy, thou wilt see the human face of our Lord Jesus Christ, gracious, lightsome, and sweet. His beauty and grace far surpasseth all that in this life can be conceived and desired.

Moreover, thou wilt see with boundless joy the most merciful Mother of Christ, the Virgin Mary, most fair and lovely; all the blessed angels and saints. Dwelling with them in perfect joy, thou wilt love and praise God without end, without labour, without difficulty. O blessed country, truly our own country! All who are there are kings and queens and children of God. There all flourish with undying beauty and enjoy untroubled peace. They are all enlightened continually with the calm light of the Godhead and have clear knowledge of truth. Everyone there knoweth individually and in a perfect way all the other citizens of heaven; everyone aboundeth in riches of every kind, in all manner of delights and joys. Do not

* *Cf.* Ps. xxxv 9.

fear lest there thou mayest lack anything that here giveth thee pleasure. For whatever beauty, attractiveness, sweetness, grace, perfection, and excellence thou canst find and experience here in any thing created, that thou wilt possess in heaven in a far higher way. In one word, every good is there.

2. The chosen ones of God, who have arrived there, receive the glory of everlasting happiness in their souls, in the fullest possible way, before the resurrection from the dead: after the judgement they will receive it also in the body.

We shall all rise at that age in which our Lord Jesus Christ was when he died for us. The old man of a hundred years and the child of one night old will then be of equal stature. And although now righteous men may be deformed, some lame, some blind, and the like, they will arise in full health and beauty without any defect. The bodies of the elect will have a delicious odour of sanctity and will shine with a brightness sevenfold that of the sun, the glory of the soul transfiguring them. They will be unable to suffer, so that they cannot be touched by anything hurtful. They will be endowed with such spiritual activity, that wherever the soul desireth to be, there will the body be present in a moment. So spiritual will they likewise be that they

will pass through solid and material things more easily than the rays of the sun penetrate glass. Then also the heavens and the elements will be changed and will be clothed for ever with wonderful beauty. All imperfections will vanish: there will be no changes of clouds, winds, rain, heat, thunder, frost, night, and darkness; instead of these there will be everlasting peace, calm, light, and brightness surpassing many-fold what we now see. The air will have far more light than now. Water will be more pure than now. The earth bright as crystal and as flat as the palm of the hand. This visible world thus made new will be for ever a most joyful sight for the saints.

Oh, how gracious and delightful will be that everlasting summer!

Then, indeed, the saints, who, in this our exile, like leafless trees in winter, appeared humble and were thought to be withered, will be clothed with beauty and glory unspeakable, and will flourish like the palm for ever and ever.*

* *Cf.* Wisd. i 3, 4.

SECTION III

THE MISERY OF HELL

For the wicked who love not God, and die in their sins, all will be exactly contrary to the happiness and glory of the righteous. For their souls, even before the general judgement, sent into everlasting fire and horrible darkness, will suffer intolerable torments. On the last day their souls will once more be united to their bodies; they will be hideous, deformed, disgusting, and heavier than lead. After the judgement hell will receive them all, and will have in it everything foul and vile. After that day no one, whether devil or man, will go forth again. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth; there will be wailing for evermore. There misery, sorrow, envy, hatred, rage, and despair without end. There the lost in incomprehensible punishments will always see, hear, and feel all that is horrible.

Do thou, beloved friend, weighing carefully in thy soul the happiness of the righteous and the unhappiness of the wicked, who end their lives without repentance, conceive an intense horror of the one, and as great a desire and love for the other as is possible. Now, indeed, thou canst see God and thy

heavenly country only by the eye of faith. But believe what thou canst not clearly see, so that, when that shall come which thou now believest, with the clear vision then bestowed on thee thou mayest rejoice with perfect joy.

Look frequently into this book, which I, now fifty years old, have written for myself and for thee as a spiritual mirror. Contemplate thyself in it carefully, that thou mayest easily know thy faults, and when known thou mayest earnestly correct them. It is an excellent thing for a man who desires to advance in the spiritual life to have certain rules and principles, according to which he may carefully order and regulate his whole life. For many souls this need is abundantly met by attentive meditation on the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is the clearest mirror for all Christians.

To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

A SHORT COMPENDIUM

OF VERY WHOLESOME SPIRITUAL TEACHING

SIX STEPS TOWARDS PERFECTION

1. In all things seek to please God instead of self.
2. The love of God and our neighbour.
3. Anything loved for its own sake standeth between the soul and God.
4. Union of will with God's Will in all things.
5. Exercise of humility.
6. The Life and Passion of Christ should be contemplated.

1. If thou desirest by a short and royal road to arrive at the knowledge of truth, perfect peace of soul, and high perfection, it is necessary to be of good will, and nothing must be closer to thy heart than to please thy most sweet Creator and benefactor, God. Thy constant business must be to watch for and to fulfil the Will of thy Lord.

Therefore, build up for thyself, in imagination, a kind of spiritual tabernacle, made not of stones but of the divine Will, and shut thyself up in it in this wise, that in everything that presenteth itself to be done or left undone, thou mayest think that the Will of God surroundeth thee, and in union with that Will it is always thy duty to live. Accordingly, thou shouldst determine never to look

at, to hear, to taste, or to use the other senses, to go nowhither, to do nothing, to speak nothing, to think and desire nothing, except only as thou dost believe will be pleasing and agreeable unto God.

For the honour and love of God give up and deny thine own will, when it is not well ordered;* mortify and kill thine own evil passions and affections; extinguish in thyself all self-seeking and wrong love of thyself. For in that precise degree in which thou wilt die to thyself and thine own bad inclinations, thou shalt live in God: and the more diligent thou art in casting away what is thine own, in so much greater abundance shalt thou receive the things of God—namely, the most holy grace of God and God himself.

Leave, therefore, entirely, put away and fly with all thy strength from those things which thou knowest to displease God and to be against his most gracious Will, as, for instance, pride, vainglory, hatred of anyone else, and other like sins and vices.

* *Inordinata.* This word means "not arranged, disordered, irregular." The proper order of charity is to love the Will of God first and for his own sake, in all things; then, for God's sake, our own souls and their welfare; then our neighbour for God's sake; lastly, our own bodily life and welfare. Inordinate or selfish love destroys this order.—TRANSLATOR.

2. Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, according to the grace vouchsafed unto thee by him. Love also thy neighbour (that is, everyone living on the earth) with most sincere charity, showing thyself kind, ready to help, and obliging to him, taking care not to vex or do him any hurt. For these two things above all others doth thy God will and especially demand of thee.

3. It will be plain that thou truly lovest God, if thou lovest nothing on earth, not even thyself, in a disorderly and irregular way, and if thou dost no longer cleave to any passing thing or to any mortal creature with a vicious affection; if in all things done or left undone thou shalt seek only the praise and glory of God; if thou dost perseveringly subject thy will to the divine Will, accepting all trying things humbly from the hands of our Lord, bearing them patiently and calmly for his sake to the end, trusting most firmly in the goodness of the Lord thy God. Remove, then, thy will and purify it from every earthly and carnal affection, as far as thou art able; so as not to love either thyself or any other creature, in this life, except in God and for God.* God himself love for his own sake.

* To love others with the love of charity means to wish them good for the love of God. We are not

Divine love can in no way brook any fellowship with earthly love.* As far, therefore, as thou art infected by the contagion of earthly and passing things, so far dost thou sin against the love of God, and to the same degree dost thou fall short of true perfection. The plain truth is that in no possible way can a man be joined and intimately united to God as long as his soul is entangled with sensual and not yet purified love of created things. For everything which a man loveth or desireth for itself and not for God, standeth between him and God. At all times, therefore, watch over thyself with care and attention, and fight manfully against low and earthly desires and vicious affections.† Cast away, too, much anxious care and inordinate sadness from the soul. Moreover, in all thy thoughts, words, deeds, exercises, and actions of every kind, look only at the honour and glory of God. With all thy heart also desire that all others should know, seek, and love God.

4. Next, desire with all thy soul and strive with all thy strength that thy will may always be conformed to the Will of God. Never murmur, never kick against God. Take

commanded to like them, but to wish them good for God's sake.—TRANSLATOR.

* *Cf.* Exod. xx 5; Deut. iv 24, v 9, etc.

† *Cf.* James iv 1; Rom. vi 12.

humbly from his hands whatsoever may happen to thee in this life, in whatsoever way it may occur, or through whatever person or thing it may come or be brought upon thee; for be assured that nothing ever can happen to anyone without the Will and permission of God. And as God himself is the infinite good, he cannot will for thee or for others anything except what is good. If, then, he allows thee to be burdened with trials, persecutions, temptations, anxieties, dryness, and darkness of mind, weakness, and sickness of body, or any other suffering, be absolutely certain that he doth this from pure charity for the salvation of thy soul. Bear, therefore, every adversity and trial, whether of soul or body, with mild, patient, and calm resignation of thyself, for love of him by whose most holy will and providence it hath come about. He hath bestowed all things on us from the depths of his love, and in all things he desireth our salvation. In his wisdom he knoweth how to draw from the evil of punishment and even of sin good, greater than the evil itself.*

* So teach the holy doctors in explaining the comforting words of St Paul, Rom. viii 28: *But we know that to them that love God all things work together unto good to those who according to his purpose are called to be saints.* From which text St Augustine and St Bernard teach that even the sins of which the elect repent work together for their good.

Believe with unshaken faith that the Lord thy God loveth thee more than thou lovest thyself, and watcheth over thee with more diligent care than thou hast or canst have for thy own welfare. Trust in him most fully, abandoning thyself and all things to his divine providence, and casting all thy care upon him.* For just in proportion to the certainty of the trust with which thou shalt abandon thyself to him with praiseworthy confidence, will be the speed of his ready help in the way best for thee.

5. For the rest remember that thou canst not hope to have any of these advantages unless thou makest it thy business to be truly humble. And in order more easily to lay hold of holy humility, contemplate and consider deeply in thy mind thine own nothingness.

1. OUR NOTHINGNESS

THOU of thyself art nothing, because out of nothing did God thy Creator make thee, and immediately wouldst thou fall back into nothingness unless he continually preserved thee. Now since thou hast not thy very being of thyself, and since thou canst not remain in being of thyself, it plainly follows that of thyself thou canst not do or even

* *Cf.* Ps. liv 23; 1 Pet. v 7.

think anything good. Of thyself thou art inclined to all evil; therefore, if left to thyself, thou wouldst fall continually into the greatest sins.*

2. THINK NOT THOU ART ANYTHING

How, therefore, is it possible that thou canst be puffed up, proud, and vainglorious, preferring thyself to others? How canst thou look upon thyself as anything? How canst thou take to thyself one tittle of those things which thou hast received from God? By sin thou hast made thyself most vile, so that thou art not worthy to live on the earth, and all creatures might justly unite in terribly revenging the injury thou hast done to the Creator.

3. ESTEEM THYSELF THE LEAST

PONDER deeply on these truths, and attending to thine unworthiness and vileness, humble and despise thyself, and refuse not to be despised by others. Willingly undertake duties that bring no honour and works that are low or menial. Esteem thyself as below all others, and obey promptly for the love of the heavenly King, who for thy sake *was made obedient even unto death.*†

* *Cf.* Osee xiii 9. † Phil. ii 3, 8.

4. PATIENCE

HOWEVER severely thou art afflicted by our Lord or by creatures, keep patience.

5. NO MERIT OF OUR OWN

ACKNOWLEDGE that thou hast not only merited nothing, but thou couldst not have merited any gift of God; for all that hath been bestowed on thee by him thou hast received by his mere bounty. Nothing whatever canst thou attribute to thyself, except what thou hast from thyself—that is, sin and a multitude of faults and failings.

6. MEDITATE DILIGENTLY ON THE LIFE AND PASSION OF THY LORD JESUS CHRIST

IMITATE according to the measure of thy strength his humility, patience, meekness, charity, loving-kindness, and his other most holy virtues. To do this should be thy principal study and endeavour, for thus wilt thou be able to arrive quickly at the highest perfection. But if our Lord doth not see good to bestow on thee, in this life, the perfection thou dost desire, this he doth because he knoweth that it would not be expedient

for thee here below. Be sure that in heaven thou shalt receive the reward, heaped up and running over, of thy labour and thy desire. There wilt thou enjoy full perfection for ever.*

* *Cf.* Luke vi 38.

CERTAIN NOTABLE SAYINGS OF BLESSED HENRY SUSO

OF THE ORDER OF FRIARS PREACHERS

SECTION I

THE LOVE OF THE WORLD AND THE LOVE OF GOD

1. The blindness of men who do not love God above all.
2. The happiness of those who cleave to God by pure love.
3. How worthy God is of love.
4. He loveth us, so unworthy of love.

1. THAT right holy man, Henry Suso, a great friend of God, pitying the miserable state of those who, entangled in vain love and wholly given to this world, neglect their own salvation, lamenteth over their evil case at the feet of our Lord in this fashion:

"Indeed, O Lord, it is a matter worthy of bitter lamentation, that so many hearts capable of thy holy love, so many souls, excellent and beautiful, all of them made after the image and likeness of God—souls which, on account of the spiritual union begun with thee, had become Queens, in thy sight, able to reign in heaven and earth—should be so madly foolish as to separate themselves from thee, to make themselves

utterly vile, and through their own faults to perish. I believe, in truth, that if the eyes of their souls saw thee as I see thee, all love of passing things would instantly die in them. Never can I wonder enough, O Lord (although once I felt far otherwise), how it is possible that any soul can rest and find pleasure in anything but in thee, the unfathomable depth of good.

2. "O incomprehensible good, that ought to be embraced by the very inmost soul! O God most sweet, how well it goes with the soul that loveth thee only, how wonderfully dost thou enlighten it with divine brightness, and dost join and unite it to thyself, more and more closely! How much heavenly comfort, sweeter than honey, doth that soul draw from thee, and how clearly doth such a soul understand the secret charm of thy love!

3. "Thou art the boundless sea of pure and priceless delight. Whatever can be imagined as gracious, fair and worthy of love in any possible way, that is found in thee beyond all measure. Nothing pleasant, attractive, and agreeable can be discovered in any created thing which is not in thee, in a certain purely spiritual way, infinitely more abundantly and more excellently. For myself, whenever I see any beautiful things, when my mind's eye sweeps over the heavens, the earth, the

woods, the meadows, and all other things in the world, all seem to cry out with one voice to my heart, drawing it to thee and saying: 'Judge from us, how beautiful and worthy of all love must be he who made us, who is himself the very fountain of all good.'

4. "O Lord Jesus, what excessive joy do I receive from thee! Whenever I remember that I am loved by thee, God most high, all that is within me melteth away for very joy. From the depths of my soul springeth forth gladness that thou art so good as to be my friend, as I lovingly hope and trust."*

SECTION II

OUR LORD'S PASSION

1. The way to meditate on the Passion.
2. Compassion.
3. Preserves us from purgatory.
4. Method of meditation on the Passion.

1. THE same Henry Suso in his dialogue with the eternal Wisdom, Christ our Lord,

* The thoughts suggested by Blessed Henry Suso were familiar to St Augustine. When he saw the beauties of nature they all seemed to cry out to him: *He made us and not we ourselves* (Ps. xciv), and therefore all created things cry out to man: "Let us love him, let us love that Beauty from whom is all beauty." —*Confessions*, x 6.

representeth him speaking thus of his Passion:

" A man's heart is far more pleasing to me, if it be free from the love of passing things and diligent in imitating the wondrous example of my life, than if he should continually lament over my sufferings and pour out as many tears as there are raindrops. For in suffering a death of such extreme bitterness my intention and Will was to draw men to imitate my example, although loving tears are also highly pleasing to me.

2. " In case thou art not able to weep over my Passion with tearful eyes, thou canst think of it with a joyful mind, on account of the boundless advantages it bringeth to thee thyself, and if thou findest it difficult to meditate upon it either with tears or with joy, then reflect upon it with dryness of spirit for my glory. For then thy worship will not be less pleasing to me than if thou didst melt in an ocean of tears and sweetness, for then thou dost act out of love not thinking of thyself.

3. " In order that the thought of my Passion may more pierce thy heart and bring more benefit to thy soul, listen to my words:

" A soul that is bound by the fetters of many sins can so take hold of the merits of my Passion and apply them to itself that, even if it deserved to be punished in purgatory

for a thousand years, in a short time it can be so freed from the guilt and the punishment of its sins, as without any purgatory to pass into heaven.*

4. "This complete forgiveness of guilt and temporal punishment can be gained in the following way:

"First, the sinner should often and with a contrite heart reflect deeply on the terrible nature and number of his sins, which he hath so irreverently committed before the eyes of his heavenly Father.

"Secondly, the works of satisfaction he can do he must not indeed omit, but he should think nothing of them, looking on them all, when compared to the guilt of sin, as a tiny raindrop compared to the ocean. Thirdly, he should form a very high idea of the boundless value of the satisfaction made by me, for only one little drop of my precious Blood could atone for the sins of a thousand worlds, although each one applieth to his own soul my satisfaction in proportion to the way he conformeth himself to me in my Passion, casting his little satisfaction, humbly and fervently, into the infinite depth of mine."

* When, that is, the act of contrition is so pure and intense as to forgive all the temporal punishment.

SECTION III

OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

1. Sublime excellence of the Eucharist.
2. In it Christ, God and Man.
3. Life to the good, to the evil death.
4. No one worthy.

1. In the same dialogue of Suso the eternal Wisdom, speaking to his minister of the holy Eucharist, saith: "The least gift coming forth from me, in this venerable Sacrament, will shine forth with more brilliant rays of light, for all eternity, than all the splendour of the visible sun, and with far more bright rays than the visible morning star. It adorns thee, too, with a certain everlasting grace and beauty, far more excellent than that with which any summer however delightful doth embellish the earth.

2. "Perhaps thou mayest doubt whether my bright Godhead shineth more than the sun, whether my most noble soul is more brilliant than any star, and whether my glorious Body is more delightful than the most pleasant summer; this thou dost truly perceive in the Eucharist.

3. "To the loving and well prepared I am the Bread of Life, but to the unworthy, who by will or by actual deed remain in mortal

sin, I am a temporal wound and an eternal curse. Certain damnation remaineth for these, unless they are reconciled to me by true repentance.

4. "Truly if a man were clothed with all the purity of the angelical nature, and distinguished by all the uprightness and holiness of all the saints and the merits of all mortals, he would not be worthy to receive me in this Sacrament. But when a man has done what he can, nothing more is demanded of him, for I supply what is wanting in him. It is better to come to this venerable Sacrament through love than to stay away through fear."

SECTION IV

RESIGNATION AND SELF-DENIAL

1. What perfection is.
2. Effect of humble confidence.
3. Self-denial the root of virtue.
4. Works done from self-will of little value.
5. The Will of God.

1. Suso also wrote the following remarkable sentences about resignation and self-denial:

"The perfect life doth not consist in abundance of spiritual comfort, but in surrendering and resigning our own will to the Will of God in things bitter as well as sweet;

in humbly obeying and in placing oneself in humility under the feet of all. To the highest angel nothing is sweeter than in all things to fulfil the Will of God; so that if he knew that it would be for the glory of God that he should occupy himself in destroying nettles and other weeds, this rather than anything else would he intensely desire to do.

2. "No resignation is more perfect and excellent than resignation when abandoned by all sensible grace and light in prayer. There is no reason why the soul should be greatly depressed because it does not enjoy much spiritual comfort; rather should it look upon itself as unworthy of any. True resignation of self into the Will of God in all things, certain and uncertain, delivereth a man from falls and from all dangers and maketh him to rejoice in all things with true peace.

"So great is the honour with which God deals with us, and so deep is his loving-kindness, that it would be utterly impossible for him to desert anyone who was able to trust in his goodness from his heart, and to abandon and resign himself completely to him.

3. "Self-denial, with obedience and humility, is the root of all virtue, salvation, and happiness. It is no doubt a painful thing for a wise and eloquent man to remain silent,

while he is despised, ridiculed, and injured; it is grievous to listen to false accusations and detraction; it is no doubt difficult for an intelligent and respectable man to yield to a bad man and a worthless good-for-nothing, and not even to contradict him; and yet all this is only, in matter of fact, to imitate the sublime example of Christ by self-denial. If in trying circumstances we cannot always be equally calm and resigned, we must not, on that account, lose hope or think we have lost God's grace, as long as we do not obstinately kick against the pricks and rebel against God's Will.

4. "Work, pursuits, and arrangements carried on with a sense of their being our own, that is, by self-will, however important they may appear, are really of little value when not accompanied with the spirit of self-denial and resignation.

5. "A man endowed with reason ought to act, not from natural inclination or impulse only, as the lower animals do, but with a deliberate motive for the glory and love of God, and never to seek his own private advantage, pleasure, exaltation or reward, but God only. On this principle we ought so to deny, mortify, and leave ourselves, that we should never refuse to suffer contempt and trials; also we ought to restrain our tongues

and senses and neither to possess nor desire anything with disorderly pleasure. As little plates of gold before the eyes prevent sight as much as those of iron, so must we renounce and remove from our soul the love of anything created, however noble, if we desire to come to the knowledge of that infinite good God. All perfection is summed up in this one word, self-denial; without it no one can possibly advance, let him do what he will."

May the Almighty God grant us the grace always to deny ourselves with unflagging energy; to mortify, leave, resign, despise, and go out of ourselves constantly. Amen.

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